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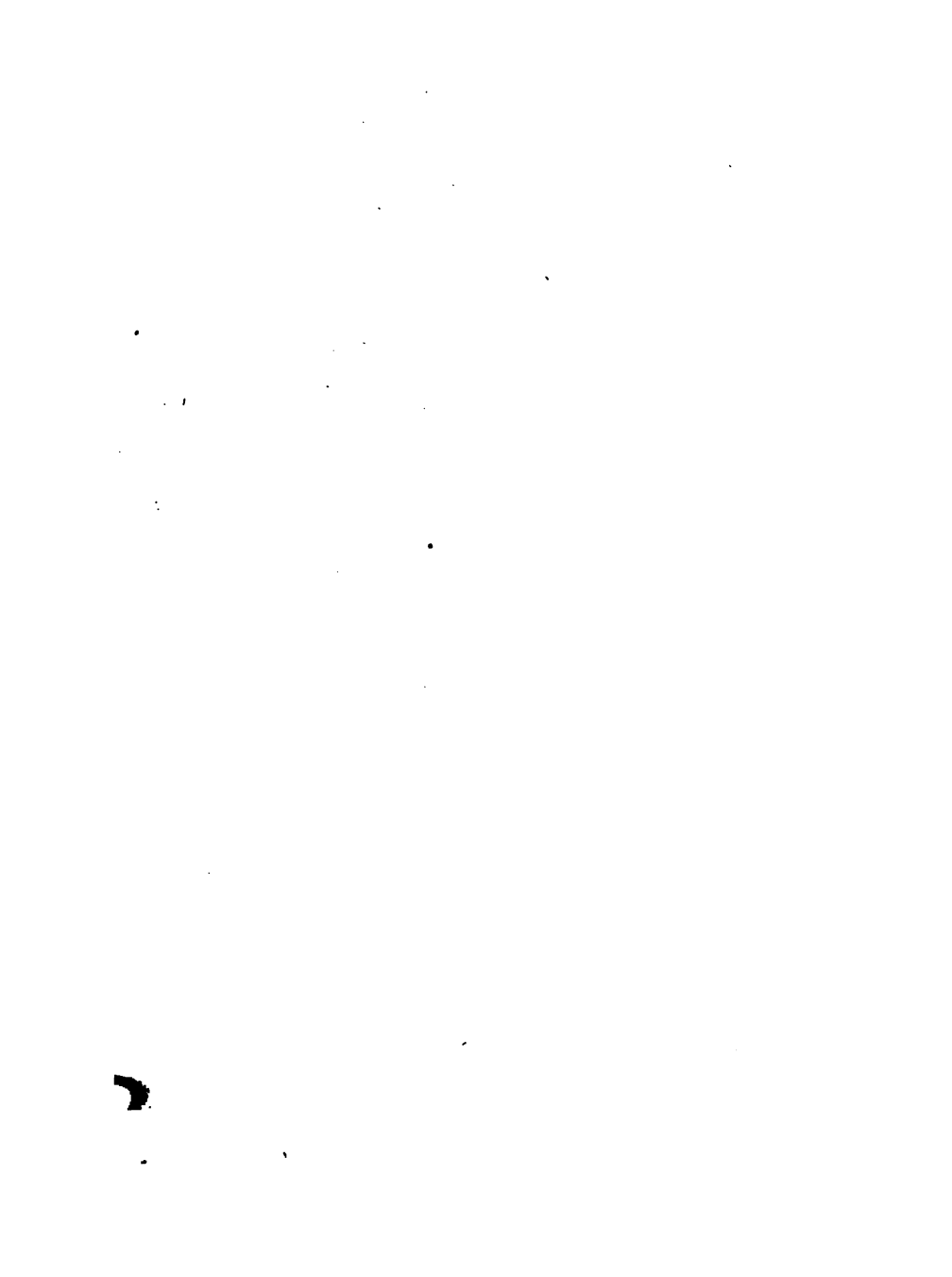
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ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS
AND
TEXTS ILLUSTRATED



BY THE
REV. J. WAREING BARDSLEY



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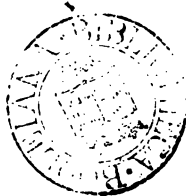
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TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.

BY THE

REV. JAMES WAREING BARDSLEY, M.A.

VICAR OF ST PAUL'S, GREENWICH.

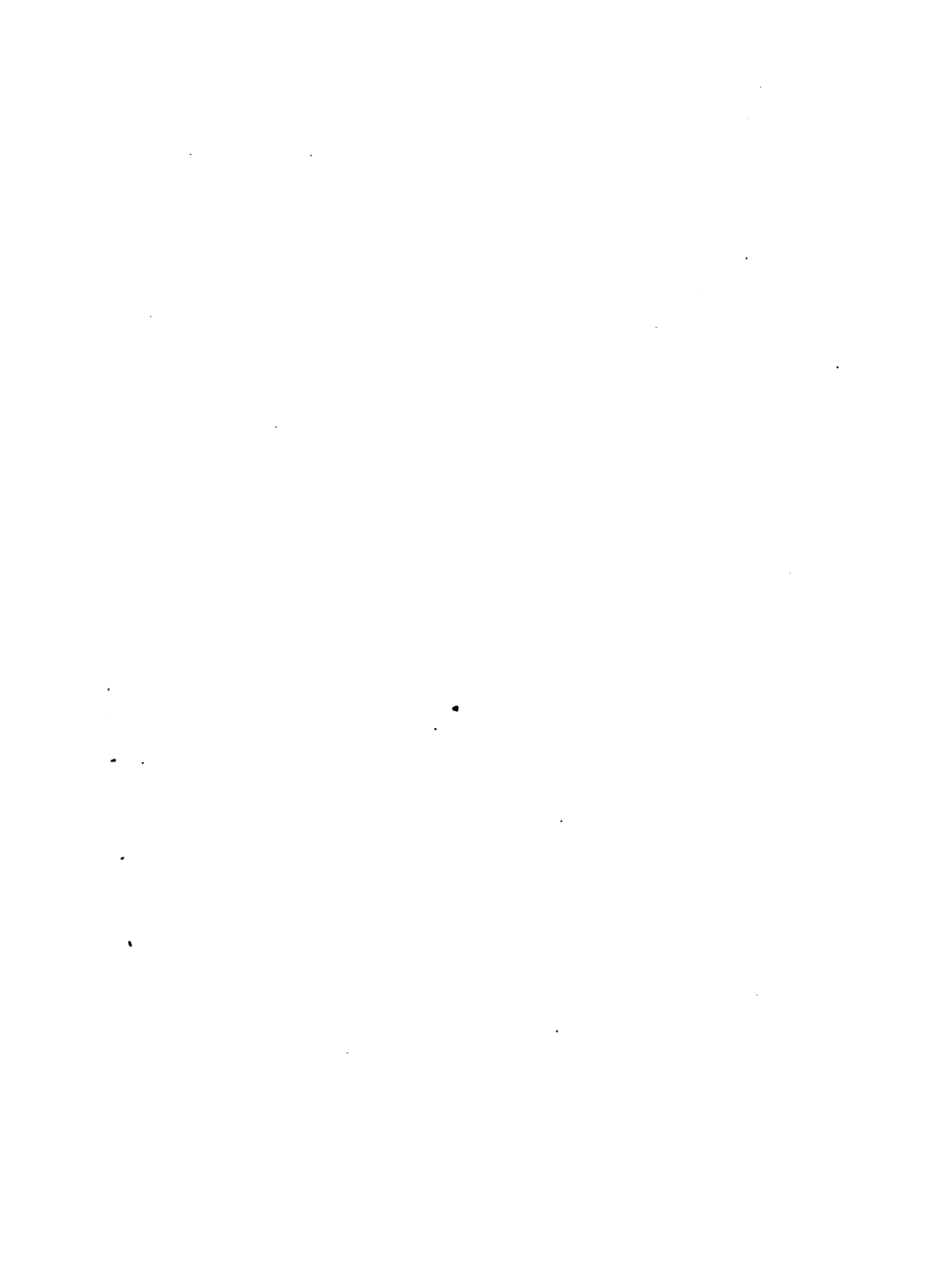


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TO THE
CONGREGATION OF ST PAUL'S

GREENWICH,

TO WHOM IT IS MY PRIVILEGE AND PLEASURE

TO MINISTER,

This little Volume is Dedicated,!

WITH MUCH SINCERE AFFECTION, BY

THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,

JAMES WAREING BARDSLEY.



PREFACE.

THE following "Illustrative Texts and Texts Illustrated," have appeared in the numbers of "The Day of Days" for 1872. When asked by the Editor, the Rev. Charles Bullock, to send some Biblical Illustrations to the Magazines, I acceded to his request, though much pressed with parochial duties, because I had long sympathised with his noble efforts to supply healthy religious literature to the middle and lower classes of the country. The Illustrations are simply fragments, for the most part suggested by the sermons of each succeeding month. I should not have thought such ephemeral productions worthy of appearing in a separate form had I not been assured that some readers of "The Day of Days" had derived instruction, and others comfort, from the thoughts introduced in them. If a single additional gleam of light should fall upon any passage of God's most precious Word, through the perusal of these pages, the writer will be more than satisfied.



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"For many years," said Luther, "I have read the whole Bible twice every year. It is a tree which is large, massy, and tufted, and all its words are so many branches and twigs. There is not one of its branches, not one of its twigs, which I have not shaken, to discover whether anything could be found upon it; and I have always discovered, even on the most slender branch, two or three apples, two or three pears, which dropped into my hands." Watch. xxii. 61.—Quoted by D'Aubigné in his "*Rationalism and Popery Refuted*."

"Look as it is on a starry night, if you cast your eyes upon many spaces of the heavens, at the first glance perhaps you shall discover no stars there; yet, if you continue to look earnestly and fixedly, some will emerge to your view that were before hid and concealed; so is it with the Holy Scriptures; if we only glance curiously upon them, no wonder we discover no more stars, no more glorious truths beaming out their light to our understanding. . . . When we have obtained the knowledge of those things that are absolutely necessary to salvation, there yet remains such depths of wisdom, both in the manner of Scripture expression, and in the mysteriousness of things expressed, that, after our utmost industry, still there will be left new truths to become the discovery of a new search."—Sermon "*On the Use of the Holy Scriptures*," by Bishop Hopkins.

ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS,
AND
TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.



I.

"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—

MICAH vii. 19.

WHEN the man whose heart has been truly stricken for sin searches God's Word for those passages which speak of pardon to returning prodigals, many and precious are the promises which meet his eye, and which breathe peace and rest to his soul. With Micah, he is constrained to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of this heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and *Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*"

Probably the simile before us has a reference to

the 15th verse, where the prophet speaks of Israel's "coming out of the land of Egypt;" when, as Moses sings, "Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath He cast into the sea . . . *the depths have covered them*: they sank into the bottom as a stone." Just as the waves of the Red Sea closed over the enemies of Israel, so the blood of Jesus Christ covers all the believer's sins.

The truth conveyed by this illustration is brought out still more strikingly when we think of the words "*depths* of the sea" in their more general significance. The land-surface below the waters of the ocean, with its valleys and mountains, its plains and chasms, as far as we can judge, is simply a counterpart of the land-surface above. We know that there are "*depths* of the sea" far greater below the surface of the ocean, than the heights of the loftiest mountain above its level. It is said that Lieutenant Maury fathomed 25,000 feet in the North Atlantic, and that Lieutenant Brooke sounded depths in the Indian Ocean even far beyond this.

After a wild and stormy night, you may have walked as I have upon a beach strewn with the planks and spars of a wreck, and seen the hull of the ship itself stranded high on the shore. If that vessel had foundered in the middle of the Atlantic or Indian Ocean, you might have sailed over the spot the next day, and not a trace of her would be seen—she would be lying in the "*depths* of the sea." God says, "I will cast all their sins"—not

into the shallow places where, so to speak, they may be cast up and seen again; but—"I will cast all their sins into the *depths of the sea*." The ocean covers the tiniest pebble and the loftiest mountain; and the ocean fulness of Christ's blood covers not only the weakest infirmities of our nature, but also the deepest depravities of our lives.

II.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—LUKE xii. 6, 7.

A RISTOTLE, one of the wisest of ancient philosophers, taught, as did the Epicureans and Academics, that the gods had a general supervision over the affairs of mankind, but that their providence was not a particular one; in other words, that it did not extend to individuals or to special things. How different from the coldness of this creed is the comfort realised by the humble disciple of Jesus, as he listens to the teaching of the Divine Word. The Master tells him that He who "tellethe the number of the stars," numbers the very hairs of his head: that God not only has the most accurate knowledge of, but also exercises the most tender forethought for, the minutest objects of creation. The little birds which abound in every thicket "cannot fall to the ground without your Father." He takes His disciples to the market. "Are not *two* sparrows sold for *one* farthing?" [Matthew x. 29], but if you buy two farthingsworth, is not one thrown in? "Are not *five* sparrows sold for *two* farthings?" I

tell you that that little bird which is thrown in was not "forgotten before God."

The Psalms abound with references of the same kind. How soon the tame bird knows the hand which feeds it. You may hold the seed in your closed fingers, but habit tells the bird what the garner contains. How its eyes wait upon you! Doubtless many a time did David, when a shepherd, feed each lamb or sheep with a special morsel from his hand. When contemplating God's providential care, he sings, "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. . . . The eyes of all wait upon Thee. . . . thou *openest thine hand* and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;" or, as it is literally, "satisfying every living thing with (the object of) its desire."

Let each reader of these lines seek to know more of the heart of God as revealed in His Word, and he will watch more closely each movement of His hand as manifested in His ways. When we know that a God of Grace lays the "foundation" of inward mercies with "sapphires," we soon learn that the fence with which a God of Providence surrounds us is a circuit of "pleasant stones."

III.

“And I will raise up for them a plant for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land.”—EZEK. xxxiv. 29.

I VENTURE to think that the force of this passage has not been given by writers on the Book of Ezekiel, from the fact that they have not seen the point of the illustration used—“a plant for renown;” or, as it literally is, “a *plantation* for renown.”

I believe that the prophet refers to a well-known habit of Eastern shepherds. In the 23d verse we read: “And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd.” “And I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.” As a consequence the pastures shall be rich with herbage; the shepherd shall lead his flock into “pastures of tenderness.” But how when the rainy season has long since past? how when the autumn is come,—when the grass is scorched and withered? how when the ground is covered with snow? At such times the Syrian shepherd leads his flock to forests which are care-

fully preserved for this purpose. Here his whole day is spent in the bushy trees, cutting down the tender twigs and the branches covered with leaves with which he feeds his flock. At such a time, when the supply of food necessarily involves much toil, the character of the shepherd comes out. Then a "good" shepherd literally "feeds" his sheep; but for his care, they must die. "I will raise for them a *plantation* for a name: they shall no more be *consumed with hunger* in the land." "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."

Happy is the covenant people pastured by Jehovah Jesus: For them blessing succeeds blessing: when the grass fails, He raises up a plantation. The "Good Shepherd" supplies food for the winter as well as the spring. From the experience of the past, the believer looks with holy confidence to the future. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

IV.

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon,
clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?”—SONG
OF SOL. vi. 10.

THE three noble reservoirs in the Valley of Urtâs, which the traveller passes on his way from Jerusalem to Hebron, called by the Arabs, El-Burâk—“the tanks,” are, without doubt, “the pools” constructed by Solomon, of which we read in the book of Ecclesiastes: “I made me great works: I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me *pools* of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees” (ii. 4, 5, 6). The subterranean fountain which feeds the highest of these reservoirs, is most probably the “spring shut up, the fountain sealed” (Sol. iv. 12). These “pools” made the whole valley a paradise of verdure and beauty. Here was the “garden inclosed.” Here the king “went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded” (Sol. vi. 11).

Almost the whole of the imagery of the book of Canticles seems to have been suggested by the visits which Solomon paid with his queen to the gardens at Etham. Josephus, I think, throws light on the passage before us. He tells us that it was the habit of Solomon to leave Jerusalem in the early morning, "sitting on high (in his chariot)," clad in a "white garment," "clear as the sun," and accompanied by 2000 horsemen,—“young men in the most delightful flower of their age,” their long hair “sprinkled with dust of gold,” clothed in Syrian purple, and yet in full armour. His escort was “terrible as an army with banners.” We have but to place his queen by his side, in “her clothing of wrought gold,” “fair as the moon,” and we have the explanation of the outward letter of the question asked by the friends of the bride, when they beheld her leaving the palace on Zion, as the first streaks of the dawn began to appear over the heights of Olivet: “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon?” for she reflects the glory of the bridegroom who, in his glistening raiment, is “clear as the sun,” and is amid his retinue “terrible as an army with banners.”

In the words of this verse we have progressive degrees of light. This gradation may refer to the amount of gospel light enjoyed by the Church in different ages. No sooner had Adam fallen, than God, in His infinite mercy, revealed to him a coming Redeemer. The promise of the “woman’s seed” was as the first gleam of the morning shining into

the midnight darkness of Adam's soul. With the call of Abraham, and in him the election of Israel, came fresh and increasing manifestations of light. Under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law, the Gospel was more fully revealed; but the light of the ceremonial law, like that of the moon, was one of *reflection*. "As the sun paints the clouds with a variety of glorious colours, which in their own nature are but dark and lowering vapours exhaled from the earth," so, says M'Ewen, "when the Sun of Righteousness arises, even the carnal ordinances and commandments of the Law, dark and earthly as they seem, are gilded by its beams, and wear a smiling appearance." The tabernacle was but a "worldly sanctuary;" and yet to the eye of the "Israelite indeed" it was radiant with beauty; for it reflected the light of Jesus. It was "fair as the moon." Under the Gospel dispensation the Church was "clear as the sun." On the cross of Calvary, in Christ's resurrection and ascension, the Sun of righteousness shone in His meridian splendour. The cross of Christ was the noontide of Divine glory.

Following out this idea of progression, I cannot but think that the expression, "terrible as an army with banners," refers to the second coming of Christ,—the consummation of all things; when the Church shall indeed be "terrible," for "the saints shall judge the world." The Church in every age has of necessity been a "Church Militant." Whenever she has been, so to speak, in full moon,

whenever she has reflected most fully the Spirit of Jesus in her life, whenever she has held most distinctly and clearly the doctrine of justification by faith—that in Him she was “clear as the sun,” then she has most fulfilled her mission,—then she has been most adverse to her foes. Whenever she has been “fair as the moon, and clear as the sun,” then has she been “terrible as an army with banners.”

V.

"That the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."—

PSALM li. 8.

I WAS lately speaking to the chaplain of a London hospital about a case in which we were mutually interested. My friend said, "The surgeons will break his leg this afternoon." I replied, "Is this absolutely necessary?" The answer was, "If they do not, he will be a cripple for life." The patient's "bones" were literally to be "broken," that he might afterwards "rejoice."

As the bones constitute the framework of man's body, the breaking of them is used in Scripture as a strong but expressive figure of the overwhelming grief which prostrates body and mind. Thus Hezekiah laments: "As a lion will He break all my bones." The words of the text may be taken as illustrative of God's general dealings with souls whether in convincing of sin, or in chastening by sorrow. Under the operation of the Holy Ghost the soul is taught that it cannot walk, much less run in the way of God's commandments, until the "bones" of self-righteousness are "broken;" that no man can say, "I will keep Thy precepts with

my *whole* heart," until, with David, he has learned that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a *broken* and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Every Christian who reads these lines knows by experience that his greatest griefs have proved his chiefest blessings, his deepest sorrows his highest joys. He can say with Paul, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Is any reader crying, with David, under a deep consciousness of sin, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed?" The bones which God has broken must and will rejoice. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; . . . and when ye see this your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb."

VI.

"Get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."—

1 KINGS xviii. 44.

EVERY person who has read Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ," or Professor Blunt's "Scriptural Coincidences," must have been struck with the argument for the veracity of the Bible, derived from the "undesigned coincidences," the "examples of consistency without contrivance," with which the Book abounds.

The eighteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings is peculiarly rich in such specimens. Take the verse before us: "Go up, say unto Ahab, prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." The plain of Esdraelon is completely surrounded with hills; Carmel, and the hills of Manasseh gird it on the south; Tabor and Gilead and Little Hermon on the east; the hills of Galilee on the north; and lower hills fence the plain from the sea-shore on the west. After a heavy shower innumerable little streams flow from these mountain-sides into the plain beneath. The Kishon, which drains it from a mere "brook," rapidly rises into a deep and turbid torrent; whilst the plain

itself becomes a morass. When "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," we are told that the "horse-hoofs were broken by means of the plungings of their mighty ones."

In the battle of Tabor, which was fought between the French and Syrian armies, in the spring of 1799, when General Kleber, with 1500 men sustained the attack of 25,000 men until Napoleon came down from Nazareth, many of the fugitives were drowned in the Deburich, a feeder of the Kishon, which in summer is completely dry.

Ahab, in driving from Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of sixteen or seventeen miles, would have to cross the plain. From the cause just mentioned a heavy shower of rain in a few hours would turn the paths now deep with the dust of a three years' drought into an impassable bog. Hence the admonition of the prophet: "Get thee down, *that the rain stop thee not.*"

VII.

"That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."—ROMANS vii. 6.

THE economy of the Gospel is to put a man in a new condition, and then he will appear in a new character. St Paul says, "Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

This statement of the apostle was strikingly illustrated in the history of Israel. The Law was given not to Israel in Egypt, but to Israel delivered out of the bondage of Egypt. God first puts Israel into a new condition—a state of liberty—before He expects Israel to appear in a new character. The fulfilling of the law was to be the test of gratitude and love for a redemption received: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," etc. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

Take an illustration of this text from daily life. We go into a mechanics' shop. The workmen leave

at 6 P.M. I enter the room at 5.45. I see one man looking at the clock—sluggishly move his tools—again look up—again work. At last the clock strikes. Down go his tools; he hastens home. I note a striking contrast in another man who seems absorbed in his work. The clock strikes, but still he works; his eye has not noted the flight of time. I linger, but still he works, and sings as he works. I go to him, and ask, "Why do you remain at work when your fellow-workman has left the shop?" He smiles, and says, "Oh, the other man is a hireling; he is paid by the hour. My father owns the shop. Of course I am anxious that his work should turn out well. I have an interest in the business. He is a good father to me," &c.


The hireling serves in the "oldness of the letter;" the son in the "newness of the spirit." "I will run in the way of Thy commandments," says David, "when Thou hast enlarged my heart."

VIII.

“Stewards of the mysteries of God.”—1 Cor. iv. 1.

THERE is, probably, hardly a reader of these pages who sometime or other has not used the phrase, “It is a mystery!” by which you meant that something had happened which you could not comprehend. It is very evident that this is not the meaning of the word as sometimes used in the New Testament, from the simple fact that our Lord said to His disciples, “Unto you it is given to *know* the mysteries of God” (St Luke viii. 10; St Matt. xiii. 11). The general meaning of the word,—I shall not attempt to speak of each distinct use of it,—is something at present hidden which will be revealed, as in 2 Thess. ii. 7, or something *which was once hidden but is now revealed*. St Paul says, “By revelation He made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was *not made known* unto the sons of men as it is *now revealed* unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephes. iii. 5).

We shall find that all the great leading doctrines of Divine Revelation are spoken of as mysteries, or, if not mentioned distinctly, as comprehended in the



one expression, "Mystery of the faith" (1 Tim. iii. 9). The *Incarnation* is called a mystery, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). The *love of Christ to the Church*, typified by the marriage union, is called a mystery: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His Church" (Eph. v. 32). The *Resurrection* is called a mystery: "Behold, I show you a great mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 51). The *partial blindness* of Israel is called a mystery: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery . . . that blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. xi. 25). The "*Man of sin*" is called a mystery: "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." The doctrine of *Predestination* is called a mystery: "The mystery of His will" (Eph. i. 9). *Revelation*, as having its source in God, is called the "Mystery of God" (Col. ii. 2); as coming to us through the mediation of Christ, "The mystery of Christ" (Eph. iii. 4); as containing the glad tidings of peace, the "Mystery of the Gospel" (Eph. vi. 19). We see that revelation, both as to its source, its channel, and its subject, is called a mystery. The "Mystery of the faith" never could have been gained by reason, but is given by revelation. It is "the faith once delivered to the saints."

We have in the sentence, "Stewards of the mysteries," a most striking illustration of the

position of ministers of the Gospel. The steward was the chief servant who distributed to the household the food which was given to him by his master for that purpose. The position was one demanding faithfulness. "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The steward had no business to keep anything back; his duty was to dispense the food to all; hence the words of our Lord, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season." The master decides the nature of the food, the servant distributes it. If any part be withheld, the steward wrongs his master and defrauds his charge. The Master has given to every minister of the Gospel certain mysteries, these he must preach, each, all. In the reign of Charles II., certain bankers amassed large fortunes by clipping the king's coin; they were called "clippers." Are there not many "clippers" in the ministry, men who deface the king's coin? Let us illustrate the verse before us.

A nobleman has a house with many rooms. In his absence he wishes the house to be thrown open to the public. It contains many rarities. His orders are strict. Let the visitors roam over the house, but whatever else you do, show them the rooms called "The Mysteries." You cannot mistake. I have painted the name over each door: "The Mystery of His Will," "The Mystery of the Gospel," &c. The servants, however, have their

favourite rooms. To be good guides they ought to study each room carefully; but no, of the house generally some of them know little. One man is never happy but in one special room, in this he delights. Visitors come; he at once ushers them into the "Mystery of His will." You cannot get him out of it; as to the opposite room, the "Mystery of the Gospel," he entirely forgets it, and yet the Master specially ordered that "every creature was to see it." Another servant never takes the visitors anywhere near the door of the room called the "Mystery of Iniquity." The visitors never even hear of its existence. It is evident that the faithful servant or steward is he who simply obeys the master, and shows all the "mysteries" to all who come.

If any brother minister condescend to read these pages, I would say, may both writer and reader exclaim with St Paul, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the *mysteries* of God."

IX.

“Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”—PSALM li. 7.

THE terrible sin of David in the matter of Bathsheba was, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, the means used for giving him a deep insight into the utter corruption of his heart: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Hence in this Psalm David prays, not so much for the pardon of any one particular sin, as for the complete renewal of his whole nature. He cries for pardon, but he does not forget to pray for purity. This desire for personal holiness is strikingly shown in the words, “*Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*”

“There are two words,” says Dr Mant, “in the Hebrew language, to express the different kinds of washing, and they are always used with the strictest propriety.” One word simply expresses the cleaning of the surface of a thing, as of a plate, or the skin,—the other signifies a washing which “pervades the substance,” as in the washing of clothes. The garment is soaked through and through, so that the defilement which is in it may come out. “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and

cleanse me from my sin." Is not this idea of inward purification also implied in the illustration which the Psalmist uses of the "snow?" Our Lord compares the mere professor to a "*white-washed* sepulchre;" chip off the thin coating of whitewash from the wall, and you come to a darker substance beneath. Dig deeply into a snow drift, and it is *white right through*. May you and I, dear reader, listen to the admonition of God by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart (as a garment) from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved;" then the promise is ours: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

X.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."—ISAIAH li. 1.

MR BIRKS, in his Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, says that the "rock" and the "pit" in this verse are "two striking figures for the moral hardness and debasement of men, unrenewed by Divine grace. The separation of souls from this rock and pit needs the power of God, and can be effected by this alone. Hence they must here allude to that Chaldean idolatry in which Abraham and Sarah once lived, and from which they had been brought out by the call of God alone. The God of glory had hewn them out of this rock of stubborn heathenism, and digged them out of its pit of idolatrous abasement, so that they became the foundation stones of a living temple, the root of that tree and stock, to which the faithful of all time belong."

I have given this comment because of its simplicity and distinctness, but I believe that it is just possible that the "rock" and the "pit" were

suggested to the mind of the prophet by the Bezetha cavern at Jerusalem; in any case this special "rock" and "pit," to my mind, afford a striking illustration of the truth of the text. The entrance to the Bezetha cavern is near the Damascus gate, and is well known to those who have visited Jerusalem. This immense cave is the quarry from which the magnificent stones of the temple were hewn. Here the traveller sees the niches in the wall from which the blocks were taken, corresponding in size and form with the huge stones in the south-east corner of the Haram area. The ground beneath his feet is covered with chippings, the dressings of the stone. The mark of the chisel is seen on every side. These chambers and galleries now so silent once resounded with the workman's tool. We have most probably in this subterranean masons' yard the explanation of 1 Kings vi. 7: "The house was built of stone, *made ready before it was brought thither*: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building."

"No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung,
Like some tall palm, the *noiseless* fabric sprung."

But to return to this cavern as an illustration of Isaiah li. 1.—Above ground at Jerusalem was Solomon's temple, a priceless gem of beauty; every stone fitted into its place in most perfect line, all carefully, and some curiously wrought by the highest Phœnician art. But whence its origin?

Beneath the ground was "the rock from whence it had been hewn" and "the hole of the pit," the rugged, dark quarry, from whence it had been digged. How typical of Israel as a nation, raised to such glory, and yet her foundation stones taken out of the pit of "Chaldean idolatry," from which as Mr Birks observes, "they had been brought out by the call of God alone."

Israel as a nation was a type of Jesus: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Israel's temple was a type of His body: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again;" and thus the temple at Jerusalem becomes a type and picture of the Israel of God, the Church of Christ, which is His body. Behold this glorious temple! As we think of the saints of God, of Moses and David, of Peter and Paul, and of those His children whom we have known, and in whom His grace has been manifest, with one of the disciples we exclaim, "See what manner of stones and what buildings!" How beauteous are the graces which adorn the believer's soul! Are these to be causes of pride? They are monuments of mercy, exhibitions of grace; behold in them from first to last the work of the Spirit! Are you children of God and heirs of eternal life? Like Abraham and Sarah, until called of Him, you were dead in trespasses and sins, heirs of eternal wrath. Are you stones of the spiritual temple, upon which the chisel of the Spirit has wrought His fair designs? "Look unto the rock from

whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit," the dark and corrupt nature, from whence ye are digged.

I cannot close this paper without mentioning one stone in the Bezetha cavern which deeply impressed my mind. It was a block which had been carefully squared by the mason's art. I wondered that it had not been removed to form part of the temple. As we came nearer I found that it had not been detached on the back side from the parent rock. The mark of the chisel was everywhere upon it, but the labour had been in vain, for some reason the work had not been finished. How many attend our churches, seem in earnest about their souls from time to time, kneel at the table of the Lord; the mark of the chisel is upon them, for they have been influenced by the pastor's care and teaching; but something keeps them back,—they are not actually separated from the world. Would that this stone from the Bezetha cavern were a silent preacher to some reader of this little volume! As you read the touching story of the young man in the gospel, you see your own image. Some one thing is keeping you back. Remember that unless you are incorporated into the spiritual temple in time, you will be left in the cavern of darkness throughout eternity. "The Spirit and the Bride say come;" Jesus says, "Come;" to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, "you also as a

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lively stone will be "built up a spiritual house."
If so, throughout eternity with adoring gratitude
you will "look unto the rock from whence ye are
hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are
digged."

XI.

“As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”—ST JOHN xvii. 18.

EVERY traveller to Jerusalem is charmed by the little paradise of verdure at the foot of Ophel, —“the King’s Garden” (Neh. iii. 15). The eye, wearied by the monotonous grey of the bare limestone hills around, rests with delight on this oasis in the desert. Whence its verdure? This part of the valley is irrigated by the “waters of Siloam,” which still, as in the days of Isaiah, “flow softly” (viii. 6). The interpretation of the word Siloam is “sent” (St. John ix. 7). Our Lord, in sending the man that was “born blind” to this special pool, evidently intended to direct his thoughts to Himself as the Healer—the Messiah—“the Sent One of God.”

Is not Jesus a “Siloam” to His people? If your heart, dear reader, be fertile and fruitful like the “King’s garden,” it is because of the secret and “soft flowing” influences of His grace. Wherever Jesus is received, He becomes to the recipient as the streams of Siloam. “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord.”

were not your souls naturally like a "waste place?" Whence, then, these aspirations after God, these desires for holiness, these longings to glorify your Lord? "The Sent One" has fulfilled in you His promise to Zion: "He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord" (Isa. li. 3).

But, says the Saviour, "As I am Thy Siloam in the world, even so are they,—my disciples,—Siloams in the world." What a noble mission is that of the followers of Jesus! to be the Lord's conduits, to fertilise and refresh—to be as the "soft flowing waters" of Siloam in our homes and families, and wherever our influences reach. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

"Oh grant that I, like this sweet well,
May Jesus' image bear;
And, spending life, my all to tell
How full His mercies are."

XII. •

“Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”—

ST MARK ix. 50.

FROM the very earliest ages salt seems to have been used in oriental countries as an emblem of that which endures. We can easily see how a substance which is an antidote to corruption and decay, became the outward symbol of perpetual amity and peace,—“a covenant of salt for ever.”

Hence, to typify the imperishable love of Jehovah to Israel, an express command was given that salt was never to be absent from the altar of burnt-offering: “With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt” (Lev. xi. 13).

Every one who has sojourned in the East has some story to tell of the sacredness attached by Arabs to a compact which has been ratified by salt: how the man who one day would have plundered you of all, will the next day sacrifice everything he values, if need be, if in the meantime you have tasted his salt. I cannot but think that in the verse before us our Lord refers to this well-known fact. An unseemly quarrel had taken place amongst His disciples. “What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace;

for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." The very children of the desert teach the disciples a lesson. They had been brought "into the bond of the covenant," they had eaten of the "king's salt," had been "salted with the salt of the palace" (Ez. iv. 14). How can they dispute who are bound by the most solemn obligation to perpetual amity and love? "Have salt in yourselves, and be *at peace* one with another."

In the British Syrian schools at Beyrout, I have seen the daughters of Maronite and Druse,—of the murdered and murderer,—sit side by side in mutual love. They had tasted of the salt. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

XIII.

"Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."—SONG OF SOL. iv. 16.

IN the verses preceding the passage before us, Christ has been describing His Church under the similitude of a garden. He has enumerated the variety of plants and spices which it contains. But there is no breath of air to move the leaves, to stir the fragrance of the spices. All is still ; and therefore He prays for the Holy Spirit to breathe on His garden, "that the spices thereof may flow out." He invokes the reviving influences of the Holy Ghost, under the familiar emblem of the wind. It may not be unprofitable to consider the winds which are mentioned as illustrating the diverse operations of the Spirit, so necessary to make the Church and the individual member of it more fruitful and fragrant.

In the Bible we read of four prevailing winds, answering to the four cardinal points ; and hence we have the expression "four winds," as equivalent to the four quarters of the hemisphere. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Why are these

two special winds mentioned? Why not pray for the west wind or the east wind? We answer that the *west* wind in Palestine invariably brought rain. "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is." In this allegory Solomon has depicted the rainy season as over. "The winter is past; *the rain is over and gone.*" The *east* wind is one to be dreaded; sweeping over the parched desert, it withered up vegetation. Hence the words of the prophet Ezekiel, "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it?" (Ezek. xvii. 10). May the Lord, who has so graciously tended our beloved Church of England in times gone by, never send His east wind upon it, as upon rebellious Ephraim, because of our negligence, to "quicken those things that are ready to die." "An east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up" (Hos. xiii. 15).

The supplication for the awaking of the north wind and the coming of the south wind, winds blowing from opposite points of the compass, points out the diverse operations of the Spirit, which are so necessary for the garden. As Sibbes observes, "We see that the courses that Christ takes, and the means that He uses with His Church, may seem contrary; but by a wise ordering all agree in the wholesome issue. A prosperous and an afflicted condition are contrary; a mild and a sharp course

may seem to cross one another; yet sweetly they agree in this, that as the Church needeth both, so Christ useth both for the Church's good."

The *north* wind rarely blows, but is naturally the coldest of the four. We read in the book of Ecclesiasticus xliii. 20, "When the cold north wind bloweth, and the water is congealed into ice, it abideth upon every gathering together of water, and clothed the water as with a breast-plate." Nipping as the north wind is, it is most beneficial in its results. When the heavens are clouded, and the light of the sun is hidden behind a curtain of mist and vapour, the bracing and invigorating wind disperses the darkness and gloom. "The north wind driveth away rain" (Prov. xxv. 23). "Fair weather cometh out of the north" (Job xxxvii. 22).

In the 9th verse of the 37th of Job, "north" is translated in the margin "*scattering*" wind, for the reason just stated. When clouds of unbelief and sin, arising from corruption and Satan, gather around the soul—when the Sun of Righteousness is hidden from the believer's view, the north wind is needed. A trying dispensation, a fatherly chastisement, is sent, and deeper knowledge of the utter corruption of the heart, under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost, is given. The wind is keen and cutting, but how it "*scatters*" the clouds. How Jesus is sought and seen; nothing at such a time comes between the soul and "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the

image of God." It was when the north wind of affliction was blowing with its most chilling blast, that David exclaimed, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" It is the believer's comfort that all creation obeys Jesus, and therefore He can recall the north wind at His pleasure. "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey Him!"

The *south* wind blows from the Arabian peninsula, and is necessarily hot. Our Lord said, "When ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass" (Luke xii. 55). "How thy garments are warm," said Elihu, "when he *quieteth* the earth by the south wind" (Job xxxvii. 17). Here the south wind is said to calm and soothe. The Spirit not only wounds but heals; not only convicts of sin but of righteousness; not only convicts but comforts and consoles. The south wind quiets the soul, and sweetly whispers rest and peace.

" Lord, let Thy love,
Fresh from above,
Soft as the south wind blow.
Call forth its bloom,
Wake its perfume,
And bid its spices flow."

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." Christ's prayer is that His Church, under the influences of the Spirit, may make her presence

felt; her goodness must appear; she must be a "fountain of gardens;" her spices must "flow out." May we each, dear reader, be not as a box of ointment closed, but like the box of spikenard broken in the house of Mary, so emblematic of the presence of Jesus, which filled all the house with its sweetness. The Master would have our name to be as a savour. May it be said of each one of us, as of Him, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth."

"Awake, O heavenly wind, and come;
Blow on this garden of perfume.
Spirit Divine! descend and breathe
A gracious gale on plants beneath."

XIV.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."—PSALM cxix. 71.

IN Miss E. J. Whately's very interesting Life of her Father, the celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, a fact is recorded, as told by Dr Whately, with reference to the introduction of the larch-tree into England. When the plants were first brought, the gardener, hearing that they came from the south of Europe, and taking it for granted that they would require warmth,—forgetting that they might grow near the snow-line,—put them into a hot-house. Day by day they withered, until the gardener in disgust threw them on a dung-heap outside; there they began to revive and bud, and at last grew into trees. They needed the cold.

The Great Husbandman often saves His plants by throwing them out into the cold. The nipping frosts of trial and affliction are oftentimes needed, if God's larches are to grow. It is under such discipline that new thoughts and feelings appear. The heart becomes more dead to the world and self. From the night of sorrow rises the morning of joy. Winter is the harbinger of spring. From the crucifixion of the old man comes the resurrec-

tion of the new, as in nature life is the child of death.

“The night is the mother of the day,
And winter of the spring ;
And ever upon old decay,
The greenest mosses spring.”

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; for
before I was afflicted I went astray : but now have
I kept Thy word.”

XV.

"You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."—EPHESIANS ii. 1.

I WAS walking one evening outside the walls of Jerusalem, when, as I passed the Moslem graveyard, I saw a woman kneeling by a tomb, and heard her speak—but to whom? She was addressing her deceased husband, telling him,—a regular custom among Moslem widows,—all of interest that had happened since she last knelt there. "What folly," said I to myself, "to talk to the dead!" And then came the thought—but if Jesus had been present, how different! The dead heard His voice and lived. At His command the daughter of Jairus awoke from the sleep of death, the young man of Nain arose from his bier, Lazarus came forth from his tomb.

It would be as useless for ministers of the Gospel to preach to dead souls as for the Moslem widow to speak to the corpse of her husband, were it not that Jesus is present with them. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "When you speak, I speak," and "the Son quickeneth whom He will." The Prophet's vision is

fulfilled in every age of the Church. The bones of the valley are still very many and still very dry ; but there are yet Ezekiels set apart of God the Holy Ghost to prophesy, " Ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah." The command is still obeyed, and the same results still follow. The Spirit of Life still joins bone to his fellow, and clothes with sacred flesh and skin ; and then, by His creative power, transforms the lifeless form into a being instinct with animation, with energy and life. Hence the statement of the Apostle, " You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

XVI.

“And there shall be no more sea.”—REV. xxi. 1.

A THOUGHTFUL writer has observed, “That all history, however accurately written, is of necessity partly written in a language that needs to be translated, and for this purpose it must be carried away and read in the very scene where the events occurred that are described in it.” This is peculiarly so with the Bible, which has innumerable points of contact with the land in which the writers lived, and in which the events narrated occurred. Not only is the language of the Bible, as that of all history, moulded by the physical formation of the country, but also by the habits, and customs, and modes of thought of its inhabitants.

The idea which the Jews had of the sea has left its impress, I think, upon this verse, and upon many others in the Bible. In passing I would observe, that the physical position of Palestine explains several facts about the sea, as described in the Word of God. The words “west,” and “sea,” are often used as synonymous terms in the Hebrew Scriptures, from the fact that the Mediterranean was the western boundary of the land.

Again, among the many references to the sea in

the Bible, there is no allusion to the tide, which is very natural when we remember that the authors were only acquainted with a "tideless sea." I return at once to the idea which the sea seems to have suggested to the Jewish mind. The Jews were not a commercial people. Jerusalem, their capital, was a centre of religious life, not of commercial enterprise. National exclusion prevented intercourse with Gentile nations. The Greeks built their cities on the coast, their ships were found on all waters, and were the source of national prosperity. The great cities of Israel, on the contrary, Hebron and Jerusalem, Shechem and Samaria, were among the mountains. Their only port, if you can call it such, was Jaffa, and this, as Dean Stanley observes, "only received the rafts which floated down from the coasts of Tyre." Cæsarea was a noble city, and had a world-famed harbour, but it was Gentile rather than Jewish. Its erection was a sign of national decadence; its builder was a Roman rather than a Jew.

It is interesting to note, that most of the references to the sea in the Word of God are such as speak of terror and dread, rather than beauty and delight. "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

Among the curses for disobedience, pronounced upon Israel from Ebal, we find recorded, as if

seemingly a climax of woe, "And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again *with ships*" (Deut. xxviii. 68). Isaiah describes the enemy of Israel, Assyria, as a wreck abandoned in a storm, but depicts the security of Zion as an inland city: "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a *quiet habitation* there the Lord will be our glory, a place of rivers, and wide-spreading streams, wherein shall go *no galley with oars, neither shall stately ships pass thereby*" (Isaiah xxxii. 21).

Whether the words of St John are to be taken literally, we cannot say; whether the fires which shall purify the surface of this sin-stained earth at the Day of Judgment shall dry up the solitudes of the ocean, or whether its wastes shall be needed to supply a dwelling-place for the multitude which "no man can number," we are not told—it would be idle to speculate; but to the mind of John, as a Jew, the sentence, "There shall be no more sea," would suggest no diminution of pleasure in his thought of the "new earth," but rather an element of joy, when he pictured the heavenly kingdom as a region of perfect security, where terror, unrest, and disquiet should for ever have passed away. Many a broken-hearted widow, many a sorrowing parent, mourning for loved ones lost at sea, can sympathise with the feelings of John when he described the new earth as without such a remembrance of sorrow.

There is another view of the expression, "There shall be no more sea," more obvious, perhaps, to

some minds than the one which I have just stated, and which doubtless has occurred to many of my readers, as it has to several expositors of this verse—*The position of John when he wrote the words.* He tells us that he was banished to the “Isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” How the heart of the faithful shepherd must have been with his absent flock! How constantly must he have longed for the communion of saints! How he must have thought with tender solicitude of the dangers which beset the churches over which he had been placed! *The sea was that which separated.* “There shall be no more sea!” Happy words, speaking of union entire and complete; of fellowship dissevered. Earthly homes must be broken. The hearth we have loved in childhood and youth must be left. Many a sorrowing Jacob is now separated from his Joseph, and has to weep over the grave of his Rachel. Jonathan may love David with a love “passing the love of women,” and yet they must sever. The elders of Miletus “wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all . . . that they should see his face no more.” Paul had to exclaim at Cæsarea, “What mean ye to weep, and break mine heart?”

The history of the past is the reality of the present, but soon shall there be a “new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and *there was no more sea.*”

XVII.

"The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree."—

PSALM xcii. 12.

THE full force of these words is, I think, seldom understood. The righteous man is compared to a palm-tree, not only because its presence in the wilderness indicates *moisture*, without which it could not grow (Exod. xv. 27); not only because of its *uprightness* (Solomon's Song vii. 7; Jer. x. 5); not only because the more it is *weighted* the more fruit it yields—whence the Latin proverb, "*Palma bus pondere crescit*" (Heb. xii. 11); not only because the *height* of the palm determines its age (Eph. iv. 13); not only because it is an *evergreen* which outlives the seasons, and resists the force of storm and tempest, and thus furnishes a striking emblem of victory (John xii. 13; Rev. vii. 9),—but specially because, being an *endogen*, its growth is from *within*; and thus, while the centre is soft, it presents so hard an exterior that no parasitic plant can destroy its life.

"The righteous," says the Psalmist, "shall flourish as the palm-tree;" the internal work of *grace* in his heart enables him to present a firm front against

the temptations which would otherwise destroy the force of his spiritual life. As Professor Balfour, to whom I am indebted for the thought, observes in his "Botany and Religion," "The allurements of the world twine round him, and he is surrounded by trials and temptations; but they do not impede his growth: he towers above all, pointing heavenwards."

XVIII.

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines : for our vines have tender grapes."—SONG OF SOL. ii. 15.

IN this well-remembered verse of the Canticles, the "little foxes," or jackals, are spoken of as devastating the vineyards. Their fondness for the grapes is well known in the East. These "little foxes" have become quite "household words," as illustrative of what are called—by no means a happy expression—"little sins." A vineyard, if it be tolerably well fenced, is much more liable to harm from the little foxes than the great ones, because the less get in through holes which exclude the greater. Christians generally guard against great temptations, but are often caught unawares by allowing what appear little temptations to enter the soul. It was the statement of a very evident truth when John Newton said, that many a child of God who was enabled by His grace to check every rebellious thought, if He removed some loved one by death, lost his temper if a child broke his vase, or a servant committed a blunder.

These "little foxes," completely hidden beneath the large leaves of the vine in the terraces of the

vineyard, sucking the "tender grapes," and crushing and bruising others at every movement, are very picturesque as illustrations of those "secret sins"—the hidden faults, the admitted foolishnesses of thought—which do so much to destroy the tender buds, our aspirations for higher and holier things; and thus retard the growth and mar the beauty of our religious life.

The early Fathers constantly applied the text to the excommunication of heretical teachers from the Church of Christ; and this interpretation of "the foxes" is quite in accordance with the language of Scripture. God, when speaking by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, says, "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts." And then as if to say, "The presence of these 'foolish prophets' in your midst arises from your own carelessness," he adds, "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither hedged the hedge for the house of Israel." If the rulers of the Church of Christ in different periods of her history had listened to the command of her Head to nip heresy in the bud, to cast out the "little leaven" which so soon leavens the "whole lump," to "take" "the *little* foxes," many "tender grapes" would have been saved, and they themselves would have been spared much trouble.

I have introduced the verse to the reader as being, to my mind, one of comfort in the presence of so much error in the Church of Christ in the present

day. The passage suggests this thought:—The “little foxes” would not have appeared had it not been for the “tender grapes.” They did not trouble the vine when it seemed dead; but when the winter was past, and the “vines with the tender grape” gave “a good smell,” then they were seen in the vineyard. Elements of evil are inseparable from times of religious revival. The same conditions which produce the preaching of truth produce the teaching of error. In winter the clod has no apparent life—the good seed has been sown in it, and lies beneath its surface. You do not see the wheat, neither do you see the weeds—it is winter. By and by the same sun, the same soil, the same showers—the influences which call forth the one—will soon evoke the other. The tender blades of wheat have hardly pierced the soil before the weeds begin to crop above its surface. One hundred years ago Christianity seemed dead in this country. As regards religious life it was winter time, both in the Church of England and out of it. Were there any Romanising teachers in her pale? They were unheard of. When, however, the winter was past, when a mighty revival took place, then they began to appear. The philosophy of the fact is not hard to be seen. I, however, simply state the fact itself. With the “tender grapes” appeared the “little foxes,” who have done and are doing so much to “spoil the vines” of that beloved branch of the Catholic Church to which we belong.

XIX.

“For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”—
HEB. ii. 10.

THE verb to *make perfect* in the Greek signifies also to *consecrate* to an office. Hence the same words which the English version of Lev. viii. 22 translates “ram of consecration,” are rendered in the Septuagint as “ram of perfections.” The priest under the law was “consecrated,” or “perfected,” to his offices by the blood of a ram. Christ was “made perfect” or “consecrated” to His office as Priest to the Church by His own sufferings—by the blood of His own sacrifice. “And being *made perfect* He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” (See also Heb. vii. 28, where “consecrated for evermore” is in the margin “perfected.”)

Though this is probably the primary meaning of the Apostle, yet it may refer generally to the fact that it was necessary for the Lord to suffer in order that He might be perfectly able to sympathise with His brethren in their sorrows. “In all their

afflictions He was afflicted." "He by *passion*," as it has been said, "acquired *compassion*." "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

It is recorded of the late Captain Vicars that he singularly won the hearts of the soldiers under his command. Whilst keeping his own position he put himself into theirs. An incident in connection with his life in the Crimea will illustrate the verse before us. In those bitter winter nights, which even now we can hardly bear to think of, when our brave soldiers slept out in an almost Arctic cold, they naturally gave way to some murmurs; but when the men under Captain Vicars learned that he absolutely refused to avail himself of special protection and comfort so long as his men suffered, and that he preferred to share their trials, all murmurings ceased. How could they complain when their captain for their sakes volunteered to share their hardships! As regards his sympathy with and his relationship towards the men, their captain was "made perfect through sufferings."

XX.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—HEB. ii. 11.

THE object of the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews is, in the first place, to declare the Deity of Jesus,—His communion of nature with the Father ; then His humanity,—His communion of nature with ourselves. The one leading thought of the second chapter of the epistle is the *Brotherhood* of Jesus.

In this Epistle the verb to *sanctify* or *make holy* is used in a sacrificial or ceremonial sense,—it means the setting apart or purifying by blood. The high priest, argues St Paul, who "sanctified Israel," made an atonement for them, and "made them clean from all their sins before the Lord," was of the same flesh and blood with themselves. He who entered into the holiest in their behalf was their brother. "Take thou unto thee Aaron thy *brother* . . . that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." "He who sanctified and they who were sanctified were all of one" nature. Jesus Christ, who is now exalted at the right hand

of the Father, and wears our nature, in His infinite condescension does not disclaim the relationship. No; for this very purpose He formed the connection. He became our *Brother* that He might become our *Priest*. "For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is told of the celebrated Archbishop Tillotson, who was the son of a Yorkshire clothier, that upon one occasion his father came to see him in London. It so happened that when the father arrived there the son was acting as host to a most distinguished party. Instead of being ashamed of his relationship with the old man in his plain dress and broad Yorkshire brogue, and instead of keeping him in another room, as many would have been tempted to do, he brought him forward, and with great deference presented him to the company as his "father."

The great "High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," though raised to such marvellous dignity, is not ashamed of His relationship with us, poor and degraded though we be. He speaks and thinks of us continually now, and when we reach the portals of heaven He will acknowledge us before angels and men as His brethren. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

XXI.

“I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren ; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.”—HEB. ii. 12.

ST PAUL, if he be the writer of this Epistle, as I think he is, quotes this verse from the Twenty-second Psalm to prove his statement in the previous verse, “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” Fear of death was the lifelong trial of Jesus. Death was to Him the penal infliction on sin, but that not His own. “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard in that He feared.” The words of the Twenty-second Psalm, “the Psalm of the Cross,” express in prophecy the dying experiences of Jesus. Thus we read that His prayer for deliverance from death, *i.e.*, from its curse and sting, was heard; that the gloom of the cross departed; and that, ere He gave up the ghost, a gleam of sunlight shone into the midnight darkness of His soul. In adoring gratitude He exclaims, “I will declare Thy Name”

—speak of Thy dealings—“unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

Never was this passage so forcibly impressed on my mind as in St Paul's Cathedral, on the day of the National Thanksgiving. England, ceasing to be Jacob, had become Israel. In answer to a nation's prayer, the heir to the throne had been recalled from the very entrance of the dark valley of the shadow of death. It was a thrilling moment when the Queen and Prince entered the Cathedral—when the vast congregation *stood* up before them; and more deeply so when Queen and Prince *knelt* before the King of kings. The text of the Archbishop—“Members one of another”—reminded us that prince and people, peer and peasant, were “all of one”—that the nation was but a family. The Prince of Wales, by his very presence, as he returned thanks to God for His great mercy, as it were before the whole nation, seemed to exclaim in the words of the Prince of the house of David, “I will declare Thy Name unto my *brethren*: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

Throughout eternity, Jesus, as the Priest and Elder Brother of the Church, will lead the praises of His *brethren* in songs of gratitude for His deliverance from death.

XXII.

“It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea : for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.”—EZEK. xxvi. 5.


THE city of Tyre is now simply a miserable fishing village, doing a small trade in tobacco grown in the neighbourhood, and in millstones from the Hauran. What a striking contrast to the emporium of commerce, the city in whose bazaars were found luxuries which enriched “the kings of the earth with the multitude of” her “riches and of” her “merchandise !”

No city or port in Syria seems to speak to the heart with such power of the truth of prophecy as Tyre, whose fall was predicted with such clearness and accuracy of detail. Some reader may say, But did not Ezekiel prophesy that the very site of the city should be unknown? I would remind the interrogator that there were two Tyres—Palætyrus, the old or continental Tyre, and Insular or New Tyre. As Bishop Newton observes, some prophecies refer to the one, some to the other. No one knows where Palætyrus stood. When Alexander besieged Insular Tyre, his only hope of taking the city was to construct a mole, and thus connect it with the mainland. In forming this mole, his materials

were taken from the ruins of the ancient city. "I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: *though thou be sought for, yet thou shalt never be found again*, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xxvi. 21). And again: "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust *in the midst of the water*." It is a matter of history, how after a seven months' siege, Alexander took the city, and burnt it. "Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will smite her power in the sea; and *she shall be devoured with fire*" (Zech. ix. 4).

I was much impressed, when visiting Tyre, with the sight of the literal fulfilment of the verse at the head of this fragment. The present village,—city I cannot call it,—stands upon the junction of the island with the mainland to which I have already referred. After passing through some narrow filthy bazaars, we came upon the harbour, where one or two fishing boats represented the navy of the city "whose merchants were princes." All at once our attention was attracted to some nets spread out to dry. We were on the site of Insular Tyre,—that Tyre which in her haughtiness had said, "I am a god: I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the sea." "With our own eyes" we saw the fulfilment of the twice-repeated prophecy: "*Thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon*."

"Dim is her glory, gone her fame;
Her boasted wealth has fled;
On her proud rock,—alas! her shame,—
The fisher's net is spread."



XXIII.

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."—ST MATT. xxiv. 46.

ANY person who compares the Christian literature of the present day with that of any period since the blessed Reformation, must be struck with the place which the Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ holds in it. For generations our clergy had been praying, "Thy kingdom come," but how few had entered Enoch's ministry, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." Many of those who were looking back with humble faith to the Atonement of their Priest, forgot to look forward with joyful hope to the return of their King. Now, it would seem that in many a pulpit the subject of the Second Coming of Christ holds that due position which it had in the preaching of Peter and Paul. As a consequence, much attention is given generally to the subject of prophecy. But how much of evil has mingled with the good! Hastily written books, propounding the wildest theories, are eagerly read and as easily received. Who does not know some of God's people who stretch text after text upon the rack until they

are made to cry out "Yes" to their favourite view? Saddest of all, practical work for the Master seems to be neglected, whilst this most solemn of all subjects is being continually discussed, not always in the best spirit, as to the how, and the when, and the where, "of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

A master leaves his home for a journey to a distant land; the servants know not when he will return; but each has his or her work to do. As time rolls on, all desire to see the master, to whom they are sincerely attached. The question of his return is often discussed, until it becomes a positive evil. John and the cook hold different theories, not only as to the time of his return, but also as to the manner of it. John is sure master will come back by sea. Cook thinks he will return by land. John says, "One thing, I know, we shall see his cab come down East Street." Cook says, "I am certain he will come down West Street." They stand in the window and look out by the hour; and unless you had seen it, you would hardly credit what time they waste over this endless discussion, and what warm words they use. You could hear them all over the house. They appeal to the housemaid, who sometimes joins them. She answers, "All I know is, I expect my master any moment, and I have much to do." She thought he would have come yesterday—everything was dusted—his room was ready. She knew he loved flowers, and she had been pleased to deny herself to have some on his

table. He may come to-day. So again she carefully goes over everything. The vase is refilled. You may see from the smile which beams on her face from time to time what is in her thoughts: "Master may come to-day!" and she thinks of his hearty "Thank you!"—"Well done, good and faithful servant;" and his smile of gratification as his eye catches the flowers. "Blessed is *that* servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing."

XXIV.

“With Whom is no variableness.”—ST JAMES i. 17.

THE general idea of the apostle in this passage seems to be, that just as in the physical world all the changes from light to darkness, from day to night, the clouds and shadows, arise from the earth and its movements, and not from the sun, so all sin and the consequences of sin, as seen in the moral darkness which surrounds us, all the change and decay, the gloom and the sadness, are in us and from us, and not in Him and from Him; for “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” “Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no *variableness*, neither shadow of turning.”

The word “variableness” is in the original *parallage*: hence our word *parallax*. What is the meaning of the term? It is “the apparent displacement of an object caused by a change of place in the observer.” For instance, if a reader of *The Day of Days* looked at the sun from Oxford or Worcester, and at the same time another of our readers looked at the sun from London, each

observer would see the sun in an apparently different point in the sky. The "variableness" is in them, I need not say, and their positions, and not in the object which they view. On account of this "apparent displacement" astronomers refer all their observations to the earth's centre, and thus the "variableness" is destroyed.

This so strikingly illustrates the truth St James sets forth, that, without entering into any discussion as to whether the apostle used the term "parallax" as a technical term of astronomy, we at once note its application. How often Christians speak as if God's countenance were changed toward them? How often do they see Him, so to speak, in a different point in the heavens, forgetting that all changes of feeling, all doubts and fears, all "variablenesses" are in themselves, and not in Him. These clouds which hide their Sun are vapours of earth and not from heaven. "I the Lord change not."

There is one centre of observation to which we should continually refer all our uncertainties with reference to God's dealings and His seeming change of position towards us, and that centre is the Cross of Christ. Here all "variableness" ceases, and God is seen by all His people in the same character. From this stand-point the adoring expression of each heart is, "God is love." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Again, all the diverse views which are held by

sceptics with reference to God and His attributes, with reference to the Deity of Christ and His atonement, and with reference to the work of God the Holy Ghost and His influence on the human heart, arise from the fact, that God is considered from the stand-point of each man's reason, and not from the central point of Revelation. "Of His own will begat He us with the *Word of Truth*." Hence the unity of doctrine in the Church of Christ in all ages.

The stand-point of the Bereans is the stand-point of the Sixth Article of the Church of England, and all who take it see with St James that God is the "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

XXV

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—ST JOHN iv. 14.

EVERY one who has read with any care the addresses of Christ must be struck, not only with their illustrative character, but, which is very important in the use of illustrations, with their perfect adaptation to the case in point. The force of His imagery is heightened from the fact that the emblems and figures used were taken from objects which the audience had in view at the time He addressed them, and from external things with which their minds were thoroughly familiar, and in which they had a special interest.

When the multitudes sought Him at Capernaum "for the meat that perisheth," He began to speak "of the meat that endureth unto everlasting life." In the case before us, the great Teacher gradually leads the mind of the woman of Samaria from the material water which she was drawing from the Well of Jacob—to which drinking she would thirst again—to the "living water" that He could give, and which would be in her "a

well of living water springing up into everlasting life."

There is a beauty in the illustration "living water," which does not appear at first sight. It is not necessary to visit Jacob's Well to see it; and yet it was there that it first occurred to my mind. Never shall I forget the vividness and reality which the fourth chapter of St John assumed when read in the scene of the narrative. In order to witness the Samaritan sacrifice, we had spent the previous night on Gerizim, the hill mentioned by the woman of Samaria when she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." (Jacob's Well lies at the foot of Gerizim.) In the tent of Amram, the Priest of the Samaritans, we had had an illustration of the 9th verse: "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." In an answer which Amram had given to a question asked by a friend, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" he used these words, "I am sure He was a good man, *else the Jews never would have crucified Him.*"

The dislike of the Samaritan to the Jew gave a touch of deep reality to the conversation recorded. As we read the chapter each allusion was vivified. The 5th verse referred to Joseph. There was his tomb just to the north. The 11th verse told us that "the well is deep." And so it was. It took $2\frac{1}{2}$ seconds from the time the pebble was dropped before we heard the splash in the water below.

We read in the 35th verse our Lord's words to His disciples, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest"—and there before us was the plain of Mukhna, one of the finest corn-lands in Palestine. In no spot in Syria did I more forcibly realise the *religio loci* than at Jacob's Well. In saying this, I think I express the general feeling of travellers to the Land of the Bible. We must at once turn to the illustration before us, "*living water*," the meaning of which, as I have said, only dawned upon me when I visited the spot.

Jacob's Well, deep as it was, and cool as its waters doubtless were, was only an artificial well, a cistern for the collection of rain and the drainage of the land. It is constantly dry. When I visited it in the spring of 1868, it had several feet of water, from the fact that in the previous winter there had been an unusual fall of rain. Last spring friends found it perfectly dry. Doubtless in the time of our Lord, from reasons into which we cannot now enter, it afforded a better supply, and yet in seasons of drought this well must have been useless. It was a *beer*, a well or cistern, and not an *ain*, or spring.

The water, says Christ to the woman of Samaria, of which I am speaking, and which I can give you for the thirst of the soul, is not from a well but from a spring. In the parching drought of summer, as well as in the rains of winter, it gushes forth a gurgling, sparkling stream. It is a well of

“living water springing up into everlasting life.” The experience of the woman of Samaria must have responded, just as the experience of every worldly soul now responds, to the hidden meaning conveyed in the statement of our Lord, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” Pleasures apart from God, like flowers severed from the tree, however sweet for a time, soon wither and die. Like the lightning’s flash they have a momentary gleam, but they leave darkness behind. When the water of the well is most needed, in the trying hours of scorching heat, in sorrow and sickness, in pain and in death, the well is dry. Worldly friends, like birds in the sunshine, are cheerful and sing; but when the summer is past, when the winter days come, when all is darkness and gloom, they have fled and are not.

Not thus is the friendship of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit. The believer’s joys are not external, but internal. He is dependent upon no earthly cisterns, for the water that Christ gives to slake the thirst of the soul is “*in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Grace is like a bird which sings as sweetly, nay, far more sweetly, in autumn and winter than in summer and spring. It is a perennial fountain ever flowing. Therefore did our Master say, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him *shall never thirst unto everlasting* (this is the Greek), but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of *living* water springing up into everlasting life.”

XXVI.

“The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock.”—PSALM xviii. 46.

AS we read the Bible we find all nature baptized and made instrumental in promoting the Saviour’s glory. Every attribute of Jehovah-Jesus is presented to us under the type and shadow of some outward thing.

The title of Rock as applied to Christ is perhaps the most common in the Bible. Is a rock the strongest thing in nature? the surest *foundation*? “I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” Was a rock a place of *defence*? “He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.” Were the rocks and fortresses places of *refuge*? (1 Sam. xiii. 6; xiv. 11.) “Be thou my strong rock, whereunto I may continually resort; Thou hast given commandment to save me, for Thou art my strong rock and my fortress.” Did the rock afford *refreshing shadow* from the sultry heat, or from the scorching wind? “A man shall be as a

hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Is a rock one of the most *unchanging* things in nature? "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock." "The strangers shall *fade away*" (ver. 45), but "the Lord *liveth*."

As we note the stability of a rock, we are reminded of the eternity and immutability of Immanuel. The "everlasting hills" speak of the "Rock of Ages." "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is *everlasting* strength." The priesthood of Aaron was one of succession: "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this Man, because He *continueth ever*, hath a priesthood which passeth not from one to another." Ministers die, relations die, friends die, but, says the believer, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock."

Oliver Heywood, in his "True Mercies of David," gives a striking illustration of the power of this truth when realised in the soul: "A woman truly godly for the main, having buried a child, and sitting alone in sadness, did yet bear up her heart with the expression 'God lives;' and, having parted with another, still she redoubled 'Comforts die, but God lives.' At last her dear husband dies, and she sat oppressed and most overwhelmed with sorrow. A little child she had yet surviving, having observed what before she spoke to comfort


herself, comes to her and saith, 'Is God *dead*, mother? is God *dead*?' This reached her heart, and, by God's blessing, recovered her former confidence in her God, who is a '*living* God.'" "The Lord *liveth*; and blessed be my Rock."

XXVII.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."—
JAS. iv. 6.

THE answer of Augustine to the question, "What is the first thing in religion?" "Humility." "And what the second?" "Humility." "And what the third?" "Humility,"—contains a truth which stands out more distinctly the more it is viewed in the light of Scripture. Humility is the one thing required in every disciple who enters the school of Christ, and the most difficult lesson which He sets before His most advanced scholars. Augustine said truly, when speaking of pride, "That which first overcame man is the last thing he overcomes." To the scholar in the sixth form, as well as the scholar in the first, the Master says daily, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Never did any man write more sweetly on the subject of humility than Archbishop Leighton, when commenting on the verse before us. He says: "God's secret dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant



and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fulness, hath no room for grace. It is lifted up, is not hallowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above." Growth in humility is the great evidence of growth in grace.

Archer Butler gives us a striking illustration of this truth. He somewhere says, that if we stand by the margin of a pool of water we see our faces reflected on the surface; but if we could be raised above it, the higher we are raised, the lower should we see ourselves (by reflection) sinking in the lake below. And thus the nearer a man gets to heaven, the more does he sink in his own esteem. The progress which St Paul made in humility has often been given by comparing three expressions in his Epistles, with the supposed dates when they were written. "Not meet to be called an *apostle*" (1 Cor. xv. 9), A.D. 59. "Less than the least of all *saints*" (Eph. iii. 8), A.D. 64. "*Sinners*, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15), A.D. 65.

The more humble our hearts, dear reader, the more will God delight to enrich us with grace; and the more we are enriched with grace the more humbly and gratefully shall we delight to return Him all the glory. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble!"

XXVIII.

“What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?”—ST MATT. xi. 7.

WHETHER John the Baptist asked the question recorded in the third verse of this chapter, for the benefit of his disciples, or for the confirmation of his own wavering faith, I do not argue. Whatever might be the motive which actuated the message, our Lord sought to remove from the minds of the multitudes around him any erroneous impression which they might form as to the character of the great preacher of repentance, and in doing so, made use of a very simple but striking illustration :—When “ye went out into the wilderness to see” John, “was it to see a reed shaken with the wind?”

The “wilderness,” *i.e.*, the valley of the Jordan, abounds in cane-brakes. After leaving the Pass of Kuneiterah, when riding towards the north end of the Dead Sea, as my eyes rested on the mountains to the east, I could not but think of the eleventh of St Matthew, and the verse (2nd) which speaks of the incarceration of John; remembering that the fortress of Machœrus, the place of his

imprisonment, lay somewhere amongst them. But it was not until I came upon a jungle of reeds at a brackish fountain called Ain Jehâir, that I thought of the force of the illustration before us. The tall canes reached a height of ten or twelve feet. The least touch of the finger, the faintest breath of wind, and these miniature palm-trees, with their slender stalks and their large tufted heads, were in motion.

Dr Tristram, in his "Natural History of the Bible," says that one of the reeds is so "slender and yielding, that it will lie perfectly flat under a gust of wind, and immediately resume its upright position." What more striking figure could be used of a yielding and vacillating character than that of a reed such as this?

I may add, that these reeds are turned to a variety of uses. The more slender joints are used as pens, and are well adapted for forming the square Hebrew characters. With such a reed probably the sponge was raised to the lips of the dying Saviour (Matt. xxvii. 48).

XXIX.

"Casting *all* your care upon Him."—1 PET. v. 7.

HOW much the anxieties of life are increased by forgetting the little but comprehensive word "*all*" of the text! What father might not learn a lesson from his child, with whom he is starting for a journey. His little boy says, "Father, you will have to carry the big bag, I cannot; and I will carry the little one." The strong father smiles, and says, "I think you had better let me carry both." They start. After a few minutes, the little bag becomes a great burden, and the child overheated and weary, says, "Father, you had better take the little bag too."

One of the greatest lessons of life is for a child of God to let his Heavenly Father carry *every* burden; to cast all his care upon Him.

Little trials are a Christian's great temptations. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "Truly," says Archbishop Leighton, "the godly are much in the wrong to themselves by not improving this their sweet privilege. They too often forget this their

sweet way, and fret themselves to no purpose; wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely *roll them over on God*." Many a man who never doubts God's care of the whole Church to the minutest particular, is tempted to distrust God's interest in the little things that concern his own daily life. "Do I confide in Him," says the same writer, "for the steering and guidance of the whole ship, and shall I be peevishly doubting and distrusting about my pack in it?" The same age that invented the telescope, brought out the microscope. The same grace that reveals distant things as near, ought to discern our least cares as great to a Father's love. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

XXX.

"The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal."—
REV. xxi. 16.

ONE of the most striking emblems under which the Church is presented to us in the Word of God is that of a city. We see at once that the figure is most appropriate.

Jean Dailé says, "By a city or state we understand a multitude of people,—united in one body, governed by the same laws, enjoying the same rights, subject to the same prince, and having among them the same form of policy."

All these conditions belong to the burgesses of the New Jerusalem whose names are written in the "Lamb's Book of Life," the sacred register in which the name of every citizen is enrolled. But whilst the "Church on earth and those above but one Communion make," and are spoken of as one city,—“Ye are come unto Mount Zion,” says the apostle, addressing the Hebrew converts, “to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,”—the spiritual Zion is presented to us under two entirely different aspects, to represent the differ-

ences of condition between the Church on earth and that in heaven. Isaiah in one place describes this city as "a *strong* city;" having "walls and *bulwarks*," and with gates *closed*, else he could not say, "Open ye the gates" (xxvi. 1, 2.) Each word speaks of defence and danger. The same prophet in another place speaks of the city as having its gates open continually: "They shall not be shut day nor night" (lx. 11); her enemies are "utterly wasted." The one, I need not say, speaks of the church militant; the other of the church triumphant. In the chapter from which I have selected the verse under consideration the apostle depicts the Church in her glorified state: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." To speak of a city as a "bride adorned" is an oriental conception of great beauty. The Moslems of the present day speak of Cairo as the "Bride of Saladin." Each stroke of the pen adds beauty to the description, and each symbol used is an exquisite emblem of precious truth.

I have chosen the text, because I think the height of the city being equal to the length and breadth affords an illustration which suggests much comfort. Before noting it, let us observe one or two leading points in the imagery employed. John pictures the city of "pure gold, like unto clear glass." Gold, as being the most precious of metals, doubtless represents the preciousness of the Church; but it does more than this, it tells us

that the Church was the Bride of Jesus. Throughout the East gold was a sacred metal. It was never employed in any service except that which was royal and divine.

Archbishop Trench, in his "Commentary on the Seven Churches," says that in the Zend-Avesta "golden" is always "synonymous with heavenly and divine." Then again, as regards the *foundations*, they are described as "precious stones," materials in their nature indestructible and in their beauty imperishable.

This city is founded upon the doctrines preached by the Apostles of the Lamb, truths which are imperishable, for they centre in Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The city is spoken of as "four-square;" doubtless this figure symbolises the symmetry of the glorified Church." Each stone is "made perfect in the fulness of spiritual grace." Hence the perfect proportion of the whole. "The length of Faith, the breadth of Charity, and the height of Hope," are all equal. Not only shall there be entire unity, but also exact uniformity. Every stone is in line with the corner-stone. The Divine Architect as He scans its proportions, and as He beholds its matchless symmetry, tells us by the pen of His servant, "the city lieth *four-square*."

Last of all, let us for a moment observe "the *gates*," as they, I think, are connected with the "height" of the city. The position of the gates: "On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates;

on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates;" doubtless signifies that the inhabitants of the city should "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Dean Alford thought that the idea of the "height" of the city being equal "to the length and the breadth," pictures not only the city, but the rock upon which it was built, as "recalling somewhat the form of the earthly Jerusalem on its escarpment above the valley of the Kedron."

The word "gates" tells us that a new idea is introduced. The apostle does not confine himself to the one idea of a city. He has already called the Church "a Bride." The portrayal of the "height" being equal to the "length and breadth" suggests the idea of a *house* or *home*. As Bishop Wordsworth tells us in his commentary on this chapter, the word ordinarily used for the gates of a city never occurs in the Apocalypse. The word "gate" is used eleven times, and always means the gate of a dwelling-house. It is the word used in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that when Peter "knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to ask who was there, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness."

In ancient Rome the houses were built to an enormous height. It is true that the palaces of the nobles occupied large areas; they were not cramped for space; but combine the two,—have a palace

covering a vast area and rising to a height equal to its length and breadth, and you have the conception of a palace in which there are not only banqueting halls for the guests of the hour, but innumerable rooms in which the friends of the prince may stay. The measures of the house given in this chapter give to the mind the conception of a home which will meet the requirements of all the members of "the household of faith," a "multitude which no man can number." *"In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."*

XXXI.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest."—
HEB. x. 19.

THE word "boldness" in the original signifies properly "freedom of speech,"—the openness with which a child addresses a parent. This spirit of filial confidence, founded upon the perfection and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, is strictly opposed to the restraint, the spirit of legal bondage, with which Old Testament saints worshipped Jehovah.

In the tabernacle were three different degrees of access to God: the outer court (the access of the people); the holy place (the access of the priest); and the holiest of all (the access of the high priest)—the nearest approach of any.

A writer on this Epistle has illustrated these three different degrees of nearness to God, as existing in the "worldly sanctuary," by the three distinct relationships to the master of a house, of a servant, a friend, and a son. At table, the servant stands and waits his master's commands; the guest, who has a nearer approach, sits and holds converse as a friend. Suddenly the child of the

family opens the door, rushes in, finds his way to the father's knee, and puts his arms around his father's neck. This is the nearest approach of all.

When Christ entered into the "holiest," "even heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us," He effected an entrance for His people: "I go to my Father and your Father." The words of St Paul, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest," are but a typical expression of his statement in the Epistle to the Romans: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

XXXII.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”—Ps. li. 5.

IN this verse David speaks of original sin, not as an excuse for actual sin, but to show that his actual sin had given him a deeper insight into the complete corruption of his nature. There was poison in the stream, because there was poison in the fountain. His transgressions flowed from a heart naturally at enmity with God. Twice over does he tell us that his mother was a handmaid of God (Ps. cxvi. 16; lxxxvi. 16); and yet he says, “in sin did my mother conceive me.” “Though she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve.”

Never shall I forget a visit which I paid to the leper hospital outside the East Gate of Damascus, which tradition says occupies the site of Naaman’s house. A woman was crossing the courtyard, whose loathsome features seemed all but eaten away by disease. In her hands—the fingers of which were almost consumed by leprosy—she held a sweet looking infant, as fair and pretty a child as

one could desire to see. The contrast was most painful. Life and health and innocence seemed to sleep in the arms of sin, disease, and death. I said to the missionary who accompanied me, "Surely the woman is not the mother of the child?" He said, "Yes, she is; the child does not show the leprosy now, but it is in the blood, and before long it will probably appear; and if the infant live long enough she will be as bad as the mother."

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The Church of England, in her 9th Article, echoes the voice of Scripture as to "birth sin," when she says that "Original sin is the fault and corruption of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam."

XXXIII.

“And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks.”—ISAIAH lxy. 10.

THE physical formation of Palestine is very simple; —a chain of mountains running down the land, north and south; a long maritime plain, or series of plains, on the west; and the Ghor, or trench of Jordan, on the east. The prophet, in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, making Sharon to stand for the whole of the lowlands on the west, of which it formed the most important part, and Achor to represent the valley on the east, comprehends the entire land when he says, “I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place to lie down in, for my people who have sought me.”

Whilst doubtless the passage has a literal interpretation, it is also figurative of the great spiritual blessings of the Church of Christ in gospel times.

The Lord's people have not only the defence of the hills, and the privileges of Zion the “holy mountain;” they have also, to illustrate the richness of their heritage, Sharon and Achor. Sharon

was the broad, rich tract of land between the mountains of the central part of Palestine and the Mediterranean, stretching from Carmel to Joppa. It was celebrated for its rich pasturage and its bushy trees. Isaiah more than once speaks of its beauty. When describing the calamities of Israel, he says: "The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness." (Isa. xxxiii. 9.) Speaking of Messiah's kingdom, he says, "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." (xxxv. 2.) The flower of Sharon was chosen as an emblem of Messiah Himself: "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys."

The force of the passage before us is brought out when we remember that David's flocks were fed in the lowlands of Sharon: "And over the herds that fed in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite." The great source of its fertility lay in the amazing quantity of water beneath its surface. Wherever labour is employed in the present day it yields a prolific return. The gardens in the neighbourhood of Joppa are celebrated. Every garden,—and there are hundreds of them,—has one or two, and even three or four, wells from which water is raised in the season, day and night, and which flows in numberless streamlets to irrigate the plants and trees. What will the whole plain be when the literal seed inherit Sharon? Sharon was actually a fold for

the Lord's flock, in the days of the apostles (Acts ix. 35). But speaking figuratively, what rich pasturage has Messiah for His sheep? "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." Wherever a shaft is sunk, so to speak, water flows. Here is the source of all the Christian's blessings—the Spirit given in answer to prayer, "for my people that have sought me," (ver. 10), freely, abundantly, continually. With joy the believer draws water out of the wells of salvation. What rich feeding do the Lord's sheep find in the ordinances of the sanctuary, in private meditation, in the prayerful study of the Word!

As we think of the country whose mountains and springs, whose trees and plains, whose physical features, were emblematic of spiritual blessings, with faith let us enter into the promised land; as the elect people, let us rejoice in our heritage. Are we the Lord's sheep? "Sharon shall be a fold of flocks." "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon? . . . If Thou know not . . . go Thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock."

XXXIV.

“And the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in.”

—ISAIAH lxxv. 10.

AMONG the many incidents in the history of Israel, none contain a more remarkable illustration of Christian experience than the events which occurred in the valley of Achor, which lies in the neighbourhood of Jericho, and forms part of the valley or plain of the Jordan (Josh. xv. 7).

“The valley of Achor,” as the margin tells us (Josh. vii. 26), means “the valley of trouble.” God had wrought a mighty victory for Israel in the destruction of Jericho—strategically the most important city in the east of Canaan. The fame of Joshua, the Lord’s servant, “was noised throughout the whole country,” but a grievous trespass was committed: “Achan the son of Carmi” took of the accursed thing; sin was in the camp, “and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.” Then it was that this valley became the scene of Israel’s great disaster, when her men fled before the men of Ai. This humiliation led to inquiry from God. Israel was searched, the sin was

detected ; Achan, the troubler of Israel, was stoned. When the sin was cast out and Israel was purified, the place of her disaster became the scene of one of her mightiest triumphs : where Israel sighed and wept, there she learned to sing and hope.

Hosea strikingly spiritualises the narrative. After speaking of God's judgment against the Jews because of their idolatry, he too proclaims promises of reconciliation : " I will give her," saith the Lord, " her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope ; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth." Hosea speaks of " the valley of *trouble*" as a place of *singing*. Isaiah speaks of it as a place of *rest* : " And the valley of *trouble* a place for the herds to *lie down* in."

When the hand of God is upon any believer because of sin ; when he has learned something of his own weakness in spiritual defeat ; when he turns humbly anew to God ; when by God's grace the sin is searched out and purged ; then, where before he was weak, he becomes strong, and the victory obtained in this " valley of trouble," becomes a " door of hope," of future conquests, telling him that at last He shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. The valley of Achor is, physically, the lowest valley in the world ; and this is the place where, in a figure, Messiah's sheep are to rest : " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Of this valley we may say figuratively what the

inspired record says literally,—it is “well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord.”

Whilst the plain of Sharon may represent the objective blessings enjoyed by the spiritual “seed,” the valley of Achor probably indicates the subjective blessings, “the peaceable fruits of righteousness,” the quietness and rest of soul given to those who are exercised by the chastening of a Father’s hand. Many a reader of this comment counts amongst the chiefest possessions of the Canaan into which he has entered, “the valley of Achor,” or “trouble;” and with Isaiah he can testify that it is a place “to lie down in.”

XXXV.

“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.”—Ps. xxxiv. 15.

IF the superscription or heading of this Psalm be correct, it was written by David in a time of great affliction, and yet it is a Psalm of thanksgiving (see 1st verse). Manton somewhere observes, that just as music, when conveyed over the water, sounds the sweetest, so praise in pensiveness, thanks amid tears, makes the sweetest music in the ears of the God of heaven.

The principal thought of this Psalm is the comfort which the afflicted enjoy from the realisation of God's presence. This comes out strikingly in the verse before us: “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.” As the little infant creeps along the floor, the eye of the parent carefully watches it. Does the child go near the fire? Immediately the parent snatches it from danger. Wherever the righteous are the eye of the Heavenly Father is upon them, to watch, to guard, to guide, to keep them. But the verse has a still more precious significancy. Whatever we love, we desire

to look upon. The mother fondly gazes on her sleeping infant, not because of its necessities, but because of her love. So perfect are the righteous, through the comeliness which God puts upon them when He robes them in the righteousness of Jesus, that the eye of holiness and love rests upon His children with infinite delight and satisfaction.

“His ears are open unto their cry.” Let us continue the same illustration. I enter a cottage and engage in conversation with the woman of the house. Her infant is in its crib, up-stairs; the little one gives a feeble cry. I do not notice it,—she does; the parent’s ears have been “unto its cry,” as the original is.

The comfort of the righteous amidst their sorrows is not only that the “eyes of the Lord are upon them,” but that their Father’s ears are listening—waiting for their cry. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

XXXVI.

"And the water ran round about the altar : and he filled the trench also with water."—1 KINGS xviii. 35.

THE abundant supply of water implied in this verse, at the time of a famine created by a three years' drought, has been one of those incidents constantly laid hold of by sceptics as one out of many supposed inaccuracies in the Word of God. Professor Blunt, in his "Undesigned Scripture Coincidences," part 11, ch. xxii., falls into a grave mistake in his anxiety to meet the difficulty, when he says, "Let us remember the local position of Carmel, that it stood upon the *coast* . . . that the water was therefore probably *sea-water*, and all the difficulty disappears." The scene of Elijah's sacrifice is one of those sites about which there is and can be no doubt. It lies at the *eastern* end of the ridge of Carmel, at a distance of hours from the sea. To have fetched water such a distance was impossible. Van de Valde, to whom we are indebted for the happy explanation of this verse, says that the sea is "an absurd explanation." After investigating the neighbourhood of the site,

what was his delight, "to discover below the steep, rocky wall of the height on which he stood—250 feet, it might be, beneath the altar plateau—a vaulted and very abundant fountain, built in the form of a tank, with a few steps leading down into it, just as one finds elsewhere in the old wells or springs of Jewish times."

But, suggests the reader, why was not this fountain used by the people at the time of the drought? I answer that the top of Carmel was so covered with forest and thicket that it was all but inaccessible. Hence the force of the words of Amos: "Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down; and *though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel*, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, &c." (ix. 2, 3). But, again objects the reader, why was not this special well dried up with the rest? In the first place, it was vaulted over by a roof, and under the shade of the trees, and therefore would not suffer from evaporation to the same extent as those exposed to the hot air: and, in the next, the fountain is a perennial one, as Dr Tristram observes in his "Land of Israel" (p. 119). "The roof partially remains, the water is some depth, and is perennial. This was corroborated by the existence of molluscs (*neritina michonii*) attached to the stones within the cisterns. In that three years' drought, when all the wells were dry, and the Kishon had sunk

to a string of pools, and then finally was lost altogether, this deep and shaded spring, fed from the roots of Carmel, remained." Josephus, who must have been perfectly familiar in his day with the current tradition of the transaction,—one of the greatest in the history of Israel,—when narrating the event, says, "He, *i.e.* Elijah, ordered them to fill four barrels with *water of the fountain*, and to pour it upon the altar" (Ant. book viii. chap. xiii. sec. 5).

XXXVII.

“For our conversation is in heaven : from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.”—
PHIL. iii. 20, 21.

IN this passage the Apostle urges the members of the Church at Philippi to persevere in their life of faith, from the thought of a great blessing which they would receive at the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the Israelites anxiously awaited the return of the high priest from the holiest, so ought they to be looking for the return of Him who was even then offering up the incense of His intercession on their behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. But the point before us is that the apostle appeals to what I would call secondary motives. He says, “Our *citizenship* is in heaven (or rather, ‘our manner of life is that of citizens of heaven’), from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,” who, at His appearing, will bring a great blessing to His waiting people, for “He shall *transfigure* our *body of Humiliation* that it may be *conformed* unto His *body of glory*.”

Some years ago, as I was walking late one evening on the banks of the Mersey, I suddenly came upon a group—a woman and three or four children—sitting on the shingle and steadily gazing seaward. I noticed that they were thinly and poorly clad for so cold an hour. A ship was every moment expected which contained a husband and father. “He was kindness itself,”—how they longed to see his face! Then came out the fact that when he came they would be re-clothed. How anxiously they desired the absent one for his own sake; but they could not entirely forget what he would bring with him.

St Paul encourages the watching family—the Church—to continued simplicity of faith by reminding them that, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears, each member of this family shall change their dress of humiliation for one of glory. It is lawful for the spiritual Israel to desire the advent of the High Priest; not only that they may behold Him who has “tarried so long in the temple,” but also that they may receive the blessing which He will bring: “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, . . . not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon; that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

XXXVIII.

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."—PSALM lxxviii. 13.*

THOUGH the railway line from Alexandria to Cairo is over a perfectly flat country, yet travellers find the ride anything but long. The least thing which rises above the surface of the plain, whether camel or ass, house or tree, woman or child, stands out in the evening sky with a distinctness which no one can realise but those who are familiar with Egyptian atmosphere and Eastern light.

At one of the side stations I saw an illustration of this text which had been suggested to me by one of Miss Whately's books. The village consisted of a few miserable mud hovels over which rose the minaret of a small mosque. On the flat roofs of these dwellings—houses I cannot call them—was a sort of second story, formed of half-baked "pots" intended as a

* A great variety of opinion exists as to the meaning of this verse and the rendering of the word "pots." In the illustration I have simply followed the English version.

cote for the pigeons which were reared for the Cairo market. The birds, startled at the approach of the train, flew upwards. As they poised their wings, bathed in the rich mellow light, they seemed "covered with silver;" whilst the feathers of the breast, on which the shadow of the wings were cast, seemed of "yellow gold." What a striking emblem of the Church in the world,—of each Christian who dwells amidst so much that defiles, yet is kept "unspotted" by the grace of God. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

XXXIX.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."—ROM. xiii. 11.

DOUBTLESS many readers of these pages have been among the number of the thousands of travellers who each year witness the sunrise from the culm of the Righi. So anxious were you to behold the sight, that you rose from your bed the moment you heard the sound of the horn which announced that the night was far spent and the day was at hand. Hastily dressing, you were soon silently and earnestly watching for the first gleam of light in the eastern sky. It may be that some one of you turned round to see whether your friend and fellow-traveller was sharing your eager anticipations, and found him wanting. You at once hastened back to the hotel and knocked loudly at his door. He, too, had been awake by the blast of the horn, but being weary, was half asleep. You exclaimed, "Do you know the time? It is high time to awake out of sleep, for the sight for which you have travelled so far, is far nearer than when first you were roused." He, too, was soon among the silent band of watchers,

and with you beheld the King of Day as he crowned each snow-capped peak, with roseate hues, and lit up the Lakes of Lucerne and Zug and Lowerz below, and many a distant valley, until the whole panorama was bathed in his glorious light.

St Paul, as a watchful sentinel in the Church, as one who was eagerly expecting the glorious appearing of His Lord and Master, earnestly exhorts the Christians at Rome to live in no debt but that of love (see ver. 10). He seeks to awaken them from their indifference by reminding them that the "day of the Lord," the consummation of their "salvation," was nearer than when "first they were roused from their sleep of sin." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

XL.

"There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."—JOSHUA viii. 35.

I HAVE chosen this verse as one of our illustrative texts, because the passage is one of those assailed by Bishop Colenso in his book on the Pentateuch. In his preface, he tells us that the main result of his examination of the Pentateuch is, "that the narrative, whatever may be its value and meaning, cannot be regarded as historically true, is not—unless I greatly deceive myself—a doubtful matter of speculation at all, it is simply a question of *facts*." Never was a book so full of transparent fallacies. Let us note the one before us. When writing on this passage, *i.e.*, on the reading of the Law in the ears of all Israel, he says, "How, then, is it conceivable that a man should do what Joshua is here said to have done, unless indeed the reading, 'every word of all that Moses commanded,' with 'the blessings and cursings according to all that is written in the book of the law,' was a mere *dumb show*, without the least idea

of those most solemn words being *heard* by those to whom they were addressed?—for surely no human voice, unless strengthened by a miracle of which the Scripture tells us nothing, could have reached the ears of a crowded mass of people, as large as the whole population of London.”

Five years ago, some friends and myself took the opportunity of a visit to Gerizim to test the accuracy of this objection. Others have done the same. The spot was evidently chosen, not only because of its sacred associations in the past, but because of its peculiar adaptation to the occasion. Mills, in his book on “The Modern Samaritans,” says:—“Those who have seen the spot, and have examined it, can readily realise the scene. Just where the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, approach each other nearest, are the two lower spurs, looking like two noble pulpits, prepared by nature, and here the Levites would stand to read. The valley running between looks just like the floor of a vast place of worship. The slopes of both mountains recede gradually, and offer room for hundreds of thousands to be conveniently seated to hear the words of the Law. The first time I stood upon that lower spur of Gerizim, the whole scenery struck me forcibly as if *Divine Providence had conformed its physical features on purpose to meet the requirements of the occasion.*” Again, no one but those acquainted with the rarity of air in Palestine can form any idea of the distance to which sound is carried. Let me give a general

instance before turning to the special one before us:—"As I sat astride a projecting rock on the north peak," says Dr Tristram, speaking of Masada, near the Dead Sea, "I could have looked down from my giddy height 1500 feet on both sides and in front, and yet so clear was the atmosphere, and so extraordinary its power of conveying sound, that I could carry on conversation in the camp below, and compare barometers and observations."—"Land of Israel," p. 311.

In the case before us, a place was chosen because of its peculiar and special acoustic properties. We are told that Jotham "went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim and lifted up his voice, and cried and said unto them, Hearken, ye men of Shechem" (Judges ix. 7). Dr Tristram, referring to this event of the reading of the Law, says:—"There is no difficulty, much less impossibility, in the problem. In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down a path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged it on; and in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, *and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally.*"

I return for a moment to the evidence of Mr Mills, that "out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word 'may be established.'" He and two friends made the following experiments. Mr Mills ascended Gerizim, his friend, Mr Williams,

clambered up Ebal, a third friend remained in the valley. He says, "I opened my Bible and read the command concerning the blessings in Hebrew, and every word was heard most distinctly by Mr Edwards in the valley, as well as by Mr Williams in Ebal. Mr Williams then read the cursings in Welsh, and we all heard every syllable. . . . It was our impression at the time, and still is, that if the whole area before and around us had been filled with the hundreds of thousands of Israel, *every soul among them would have heard every note and word with perfect clearness*" (p. 59). Dr Robinson, a most cautious and accurate writer, speaks of a place in the Lebanon where the voice can be heard for two miles.

Now for my own experience. My father, the Rector of St Anne's, Manchester, and a friend, Mr Haworth, the Rector of St Catherine's, Manchester, stood in the middle of the plain—the floor, so to speak, of that sublime place of worship once crowded with so vast an assembly. My elder brother, the Incumbent of St Saviour's, Liverpool, and another friend, stood on the spur of Gerizim—I stood on the opposite spur of Ebal. The day was against the experiment. The air was moist, and there was a slight wind. Not only was a conversation carried on with raised voices, but the following incident occurred. My father said to his friend, *sotto voce*, "I did not quite catch what L. said" (our friend on the spur of Gerizim). He and my brother returned, and said to my father, "Did you

not say to Mr Haworth, '*I did not quite catch what L. said?*'"

If Bishop Colenso had tested *facts*, he would never have indulged in such *speculations*. In the words of the Rev. J. W. Burgon, in his "Inspiration and Interpretation," quoted by Dr Colenso himself, "From such 'free handling' the cause of sacred truth can never suffer."

XLI

“Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth.”—

ST. JAS. i. 18.

THE apostle, having stated in the context that “every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,” mentions as the most striking example of this truth, the regeneration of the soul. Not from any necessity on God’s part, nor from any merit on ours, but of His own free sovereign will “begat He us.” “I will love them freely.” The complete freedom of this act is brought out in the word “begat,” in the Greek, in a manner which is not seen by the English reader. The word means *maternal conception*. This word is only used in one other place in the New Testament, in the 18th verse of this chapter, and is there translated “conceived.” The apostle shows from the use of the word in the first instance, that sin is the offspring of temptation and inclination or “lust.” In other words, the heart of man is the mother of sin. Having given the parentage of sin, he gives the parentage of holiness. Note the con-

trast. Is the heart of man the mother of holiness? We have inclination and power to conceive sin when the temptation is presented: have we inclination and power to produce holiness, when it is implanted by Him who is the Father of "every good and perfect gift"? No, says St. James; the heart of man is the mother of that which is evil, but not of that which is good. Of our will we conceive the bad: "Of His own will conceives He in us" the good. "With reverence be it said," says Bishop Wordsworth, "in the work of our regeneration, He is the Father of lights; and if we be 'lights in the world,' it is because as a *mother* also He has given birth to us 'by the word of truth.'"

But this word not only brings out an important doctrinal truth, but also contains a thought of much comfort. The various relationships of life are among our choicest blessings; but just as all the colours of the rainbow are comprehended in one pure white ray of light, so all the varied forms of affection, whether appearing in the love of a father or mother, husband or wife, brother, sister, or friend, have their origin in Him who "is love." Each special phase of affection in the creature must be in the Creator in an infinite degree. And yet how often is this forgotten! If a father be removed, the Christian immediately thinks of Him who is the "Father of the fatherless;" but let a mother be taken, and he forgets to reason that that love which came out of God must be in God. David seems to have realised this when he sang, "When my father and my *mother* forsake me,

then the Lord will take me up " (Ps. xxvii. 12).

" Can a *woman* forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?

Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee "

(Isa. xlix. 15).

XLII.

“Without the camp shall his habitation be.”—LEVITICUS xiii. 46.

ANY one who has visited Jerusalem may have seen the lepers standing day by day near the Jaffa gate, soliciting alms from those passing the threshold of the city, which they themselves were not allowed to enter. Most travellers who have either witnessed this painful sight, or visited the houses of the lepers at the Zion gate, must have recalled the words, “Without the camp shall his habitation be.”

The bitterest dregs in the cup of sorrow which the leprous Jew had to drink must have been his exclusion from the holy city. The Jew loved Zion, not only with all the ardour of patriotism, as the centre of national interest, but also with all the depth of religious devotion, as associated with his most sacred feelings. Whilst the Israelite, who was ceremonially clean, entered with joy the portals of the city with the words of the anthem on his lips, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord: our feet shall stand within Thy gates, O Jerusalem:”—the leper, in the bitterest

of captivities, could only weep when he remembered Zion. No type so strikingly brings out the separating influences of sin as that of leprosy; telling the sinner in no uncertain tones, that unless his sin be pardoned, his leprosy cleansed, he shall never enter the gates of the heavenly city, or as a member of the "holy priesthood," offer up sacrifices of praise in the courts of the temple above. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." The exclusion of our first parents from the garden of Paradise, consequent upon their sin, was the first type of the same spiritual truth: "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Howells in one of his sermons finely says, that when Adam sinned, God having locked the gate of Paradise to prevent the entrance of man, cast the key into the very depths of hell. There it lay, and man must for ever have been excluded—"without the camp," the place of God's dwelling, whether typified by garden, camp, or city, must his habitation have been—had not the Son of God with His Father's will and pleasure wrought out a deliverance. As He stood on the edge of the fiery abyss—the wrath of God due to man's sin—He drew back. Again He looked into the terrible gulf. His soul was melted within Him like wax. Then, with a love

incomprehensible were it not Divine, He plunged into its depths; found the key; ascended up on high; led captivity captive; opened the gate of Paradise; and now the kingdom of heaven is open to all believers. Well may the apostle, after stating that Jesus "suffered without the gate," add, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

"Almighty God, who through Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and *opened unto us the gates of everlasting life*; we humbly beseech Thee, that as, by Thy special grace preventing us, Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end."

XLIII.

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs [*i.e.*, the cliffs], let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."—SONG OF SOL. ii. 14.

THIS verse forms part of the well-known passage in which Solomon, under Divine inspiration, as a skilful artist, paints, as it were, with a few strokes, an exquisite picture of a Syrian spring. There is no poetic licence, as some suppose. Each allusion is made by one who carefully observed and copied nature. The time when "the singing of birds is come" strictly accords with the appearance of "flowers on the earth," the blossoms of the pomegranate, the tender grapes on the vine, the green figs, and "the voice of the turtle." The return of the turtle-dove from warmer climes is in Syria an evidence of the dawn of spring or early summer ; just as in England the note of the cuckoo tells us that the "winter is past." "The *turtle* and the crane and swallow observe the time of their coming" (Jer. viii. 7). Dr Tristram in his "Natural History

of the Bible," writes: "Search the glades and valleys even by sultry Jordan, at the end of March, and not a turtle-dove is to be seen; return in the second week in April, and clouds of doves are feeding on the cloves of the plain."

Interesting as it is to note the accuracy of the letter of this inspired allegory, more deeply interesting is it to read its spirit. Whilst the "singing of birds" doubtless represents the spiritual joy which rises in the believer's soul when the "winter is past," when "old things pass away and all things become new," the "voice of the turtle" may probably represent the mourning for sin which is inseparable from a spiritual revival, and which tells us that spring is come.

The plaintive note of the turtle-dove is used in the Bible as an emblem of deep sorrow. "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves" (Isa. lix. 11). By a natural sequence of thought, the writer passes from the turtle in the verse before us to speak of another species of dove—the rock-pigeon—as combining in its habits a fuller emblem of spiritual experience. It has in common with the voice of the turtle-dove the same sadness of note. Hence Ezekiel says, "They that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys [*i.e.*, of the rocky passes, the ravines], all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity" (vii. 16). Unlike the turtle, however, it avoids the trees, the haunts of men, and builds its nest, as Solomon tells us, "in the clefts of the

rock, in the secret places of the stairs"—*i.e.*, of the cliffs; hence the words of Jeremiah, "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rocks, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the side of the hole's mouth" (xlviii. 28). Here is its security; it has not talons to fight with, but swift wings to fly with. It would be a prize for every bird of prey, were it not for its secret hiding-place.

What more exquisite image can nature supply of a soul helpless in the fight with Satan, sin, and self, fleeing for refuge, not to the rock of Sinai—there is no cleft in it—but to the smitten Rock in Horeb, "which rock is Christ," and there, alone with Jesus, "in the secret places of the cliff," making confession of sin? "I did mourn as a dove, mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

This cry of the new-born child makes sweet music in the ears of Immanuel, for He "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." "Let me see thy countenance." "Black" as you confess yourself, yet you are "comely" in the comeliness which I have put upon thee. "Let me hear thy voice," for in the note of my dove I ever hear the voice of the Spirit, and therefore it is sweet. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit

Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

XLIV.

"O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—


ST MATT. XV. 28.

THE story of the Syrophenician woman has been bequeathed by the Holy Spirit to the Church in all ages as an encouragement to perseverance in prayer. There can be no greater mistake than to imagine that because an answer to prayer is not immediately given, therefore the petition is denied. Jesus, in the case before us, dealt with the woman of Canaan—I say it reverently—as His Father dealt with Himself. Not only had Jesus to *ask* for the blessings which He received,—“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession” (Ps. ii. 8), but also to ask perseveringly. We hear Him say, “I *waited patiently* for the Lord; and He inclined unto me and heard my cry.” The continued supplication of this woman was a sure evidence that her prayer was answered from the first petition, inasmuch as strength was given her to persevere. God gives patience to wait, and the patience given is itself an evidence that He hears

our prayer. God loves to be wrestled with, and delays to answer that He may continue to hear the voice of His Spirit, which is so sweet to His ears.

Archbishop Usher, in his sermon on "The Throne of Grace," gives an exquisite illustration of this thought. "It is said in the Canticles, honey is under the lips of the Church: why so? It is because there is no honey sweeter to the palate than spiritual prayers to God. And therefore God delays to answer thee because He would have more of it. If the musicians come and play at our doors and windows, if we delight not in their music, we throw them out money presently, that they may be gone, but if the music please us, we forbear to give them money, because we would keep them longer, for we like the music. So the Lord loves and delights in the sweet words of His children; and therefore puts them off and answers them not presently."

In the case of the Syrophenician woman, we see that Christ, in each answer, held out some little hope to which her faith could cling; and faith is like a vine which lays hold of the least projection of the wall with its tendrils, and thus climbs upward. God, while He delays to answer, gives hopes which faith may grasp. Then when He answers, with Divine generosity He says, "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."



XLV.

"I am come into my garden."—SONG OF SOL. v. 1.

IN the verse before us, as well as in the passage immediately preceding it, Christ compares the Church to a garden. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse."

No more striking illustration could be given of the Church than the emblem employed. This was specially the case as regards the garden of Solomon, described in this book, with its plants and flowers so delightful to the eye, with its fruits so sweet to the taste, and its spices so pleasant to the smell—when we remember that several of the plants mentioned were not indigenous to the soil, but brought there from foreign lands. "Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices," were exotics—from the highlands and plains of India, from Southern Arabia, and the far East. This garden, thus considered, becomes an illustrative prophecy of the kingdom of Messiah which was to include the Gentile as well as the Jew, "that they might be called (whether Gentile or Jew) trees of

Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." The idea is strengthened by calling the Church, in chap. iv. 15, "a fountain of gardens." Her streams were to refresh many lands, and in her mission she was to create gardens amid many distant wastes—the parched wilderness of the Gentile world was to be glad because of her, and the desert was to "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

I have chosen the sentence which heads this paper, "I am come into my garden," as one of our illustrative texts, because I wish to suggest to the mind of the reader a thought of a different character—viz., that man seems universally to delight in a garden.

The very emblem is suggestive of pleasure. The culture of a garden seems one of the purest of pleasures. An English statesman of former times said, when writing of a garden, "If we believe the Scriptures, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a garden the happiest He could give him, or else He would not have placed Adam in that of Eden." The delight of the Man Christ Jesus is His garden. No sooner does the Church pray, "Let my beloved come into His garden," than He immediately answers, "I am come into my garden." The second Adam has one deep element of interest in His Paradise which the first Adam had not in Eden. In His garden each tree has been planted and watered, trained and tended by Himself. Endless as is the variety, our Solomon

knows them all, from the tiny hyssop to the stately cedar. When Dioclesian was invited to resume the imperial purple, he exclaimed, "Ah, could you but see those fruits and herbs of mine own raising at Salona, you would never talk to me of empire!" Though Jesus is so highly exalted, His heart is amid the "fruits and herbs" of His "own raising" in the garden of the Church on earth. Hence it is that He has established a second garden, or Paradise—the Church in Heaven, so that He may be gradually transplanting to His more immediate presence His trees from one to the other. The Church in heaven might often exclaim, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies."

Whenever we are removed from the garden on earth, may it not be to hear Christ condemn us as fruitless trees to be cast out and burnt, but rather to hear Him say, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," in heaven!

XLVI.

"And the common people heard Him gladly."—ST MARK xii. 37.

CHRIST adapted His teaching to the ignorant crowds around Him by the use of striking and homely illustrations. We are told that "the people were very attentive to hear Him." Have we not the secret of the spell which bound those multitudes in the words, "Whereunto shall I *liken* it?" From the commonest features of life Christ drew the most sublime lessons. A patch on a garment, a platter clean on the outside, a lighted candle, the salt, the leaven, are all brought into His teaching. He made domestic joys and sorrows convey spiritual lessons, and thus the common water of every-day life was changed by Jesus into the "good wine" of gospel instruction. His parables are so illustrative and clear that the weakest capacity can grasp them, and yet so deep that the most thoughtful mind has never fathomed them. The simplicity of the teaching of Jesus deceives the thoughtless reader as to its depth.

I well remember a rock near Portsoderic in the Isle of Man, from which, as a boy, I have looked

down into the clear water of the bay. I could see every crab and shell and weed on the sand below. How shallow I thought it! The very clearness of the water deceived me. Time rolled on, and again I looked from the same rock. My eye had meanwhile learned better to calculate distance. How clear still, but how deep! Yet even then I was astonished when told its true depth. Who has fathomed the words of Jesus? The "common people" would hear ministers more "gladly," if, to use the words of Robert Hall, they not only told their hearers "what things *are*, but what they are *like*."

XLVII.

“ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that
I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.”
—PSALM xxvii. 4.

IT is very probable that the 27th Psalm was composed by David when banished from Jerusalem by the rebellion of Absalom. Whilst breathing a spirit of remarkable trust in Jehovah's care, the Psalmist expresses his yearning desire to enter once again “ the house of the Lord.” The comforts of home, the luxury of power, are swallowed up in this,—“ one thing have I desired.” As a child he loved the Father's dwelling-place. “ God dwells in the congregation of the righteous ” (Ps. lxxxii. 1). In order to understand the force of the expression, “ Beauty of the Lord,” we must remember that the tabernacle of Moses was then at Gibeon, where it remained until removed by Solomon to the temple (2. Chron. i. 3, 4), and that the ark alone was on Mount Zion. We are told that David “ set the Ark of the Lord in the midst of the tabernacle that he had pitched for it ; ” and then he “ offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings

before the Lord " (2 Sam. vi. 17). The *propitiatory* was to David the "*beauty* of the Lord." The mercy seat was a mirror in which he saw reflected the beautiful grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Each colour of the rainbow has its beauty; one colour may be sombre, another gay, but there is a special beauty which arises from the blended radiance of all, the combined harmony of the whole. To a spiritual perception each attribute of God has its beauty. The believer loves God's justice and holiness as well as His goodness and mercy; but it is in the harmony of all God's attributes, the blending of mercy and justice, of holiness and love, of grace and truth, as seen in the Cross of Christ, that the pardoned sinner beholds the "Beauty of the Lord;" for there "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Out of Zion (*i.e.*, from the propitiatory), the *perfection of beauty*, God hath shined" (Ps. l. 2).

What, my reader, are your feelings with reference to the ordinances of the sanctuary? The ark was but an outward symbol, and yet it was no silent preacher; it had a voice which reached the heart of David. If you have realised your guilt, how deeply you will love the place where the Gospel is proclaimed, where are unfolded the sweet mysteries of salvation, and where you celebrate a dying Saviour's love! Your fervent desire will be to "dwell in the house of the Lord," that you may behold His "*beauty*."

The Jewish Rabbis say that when Joseph

collected corn in the years of plenty and filled the storehouses with grain, he cast all the chaff into the river Nile, that the people dwelling on the banks might be cheered when they saw these signs of plenty, and that they might say, "What an abundance of corn must there be in the treasury of Joseph!" The members of Christ's kingdom on earth love the "House of the Lord." They love to dwell by the river of His ordinances, for there Jesus sends down signs and tokens which cheer their hearts, and tell them that in His presence is fulness of joy, and at His "right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Such can understand the feeling of David when he wrote, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple."

XLVIII.

"Able to save . . . to the uttermost."—HEBREWS vii. 25.

THE first verse of the 3rd chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is really the text of which the remainder of the Epistle is the sermon. The writer divides his subject into two heads. He asks the Hebrew converts to consider Christ: 1st, as the antitype of Moses, "the Apostle," the "sent one" of God (Exodus iii. 10-15; St John xx. 21). 2d, As the antitype of Aaron, the High Priest.

The first point occupies the whole of the 3d chapter, and the first 13 verses of the 4th. With the 14th verse of the 4th chapter commences the consideration of the priesthood of Jesus. The introduction of the priesthood of Melchisedec (v. 6-10, vi. 20, vii. 1, &c.), whilst speaking of the typical character of the Aaronic priesthood, at first sight seems somewhat to confuse the argument, but a moment's consideration of the typology of the Old Testament removes any such thought. No single emblem or figure can represent the fulness of Christ in His person, His work, and His offices; hence a system of dualism pervades the types, as in

the case of the "two birds" connected with the cleansing of the leper, and the "two kids of the goats" connected with the Day of Atonement.

Just as through the two lenses of the stereoscope, the one object comes out more distinctly, so through the two typical priesthoods, the one of Aaron, and the other of Melchisedec, the Priesthood of Jesus is seen to stand out more clearly and more fully. What the one lacked the other supplied. The two points in which Melchisedec typified Christ were (1.), that he was a Royal Priest. Such was Christ; He sprung out of Judah, the royal tribe; in Him the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled, "He shall be a priest upon His throne" (vi. 13). On this I must not dwell. (2.) That he was the only priest of his order of whom we have any record. The grand imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood was that it was one of succession. Aaron died, Eleazar died, Jehoiada died, &c. "They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death" (v. 23).

How could a dying priesthood typify the ever-living priest Christ Jesus?

By divine arrangement a priest was chosen whose name was Melchisedec. We are not told who was his predecessor, nor are we told the name of his successor. He stands out on the page of Inspiration the one and only priest of his line, that he might prefigure the "great High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," who stands alone in His *office* and order, and will stand alone throughout

eternity,—“A priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

From this fact the apostle draws a thought of great comfort. “Wherefore He is able also to *save* them *to the uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” It is a blessed privilege for the minister of the gospel to proclaim to the vilest sinner the ability of Jesus to save. No verse is more frequently quoted than the one before us as a proof of Christ’s saving powers. But to limit the text to such an application is entirely to misunderstand the argument of the apostle, which is, that Christ’s continual intercession is adapted to the continual need of His people. The deduction to be drawn from the untransmittable nature of Christ’s priesthood is that He is able to save entirely and completely, that He is able to save *to the very end*. Let me illustrate the point. Never shall I forget the recorded experience of a pervert from the Church of England to that of Rome, who, for the first time, went to confession. The shame and the anguish of opening out the most secret thoughts to a fellow-man were intense. Supposing that after a few years the priest died, again would that person have to lacerate every feeling by opening out his mind afresh to a stranger. Not so with the penitent who has confessed his sins to Jesus, the true and only Priest who is alone able to give absolution.

“He never dies!—He is able to save *evermore*, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

Let us go to the deathbed of some departing saint. You ask, "Is Christ with you now?" The dying one answers, "Yes, oh! yes." By and by the dying one is too feeble even to speak. Perhaps again you say, "Is Jesus with you still?" The motion of the hand, or the lips, or the smile on the face, answer, "Yes;" and when death has settled on the brow and you feel that you stand at the entrance of the dark valley, through which the soul is now passing, One is still near Whose rod and Whose staff support and comfort; He fulfils His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Wherefore He is able also to save them *to the very end* who come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

THE END.

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